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# Love in Umbria

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By LUCY HEALD



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# LOVE IN UMBRIA



# Love in Umbria

*A Drama of the First  
Franciscans*

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By LUCY HEALD, A.M.

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CAMBRIDGE

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TO  
S. A. B.,  
E. M. de L.,  
AND  
H. P. H.



## PREFACE

WASHINGTON's acquaintance with the Warringtons is not recorded in history. With such a precedent — *si parva licet componere magnis* — I do not hesitate to state that many incidents in the following pages cannot be verified by any authentic biography of or even legends concerning St. Francis of Assisi.

L. H.



## *DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

TRISTAN, CONTE DI SENSOLI      }  
VALENTE, his brother                } *to be played by one actor*

VIVIANA

FELICE, a gardener, her servant

INNOCENZA, a peasant girl of Assisi

LUIGI, MARCHESE D'ALESSI, brother to VIVIANA

VIVIANA's DUENNA

BIANCA      }  
EMILIA        } *servants to the MARCHESE*  
BEPO

GIACOMO, servant to CONTE DI SENSOLI

MADDALENA      }  
TESSA         } *gossiping neighbors*

NICCOLO      }  
GUIDO        } *loungers*

PIETRO, a beggar

GIOVANNI, another beggar

SOFIA, a flower-seller

GABRIELLA      }  
ANGIOLA       } *peasant girls of Perusia*

viii      D R A M A T I S      P E R S O N Æ

MARIA, *Come from Assisi to trade  
Bargainers, gossips, loungers, children in the square at  
Perusia*

FATHER FRANCESCO, *the Little Poor Man*

BROTHER LEO

BROTHER PAOLO, *the little Boy-brother*

BROTHER JUNIPER, *A Cobbler, "the plaything of Jesu Christ"*

BROTHER GILES, *the Reasoner*

BROTHERS SIMON, MASSEO, THE SACRISTAN, and other Brothers

TWO LITTLE BOYS OF ASSISI

SISTER CLARE

SISTER INNOCENZA, *the youngest of the nuns, and other Sisters*

PROLOGUE. *Scene: a public square in Perusia*

ACT I. *Scene: the kitchen of the Portiuncula at Assisi*

ACT II. *Scene: the garden of the Villa d'Alessi*

ACT III. *Scene 1: a cross-roads in the fields near Assisi*

*Scene 2: the garden at Saint Damian's*

## PROLOGUE

SCENE: *A public square in Perusia. A street runs through the square from left to right, centre. At right is seen the Villa d'Alessi, facing on the square. In centre, a fountain where women are washing clothes and filling jars with water. Other houses line the street that runs through the square and also an alley leading back from the front of the stage, centre. At left, front, a booth where flowers and fruit are sold. Venders, loungers, beggars, shoppers make the square a changing spectacle.*

*Bianca (sorting the clothes at the fountain)*

Emilia, it's bad luck you will bring to the Lady Viviana by your carelessness. Madonna protect her, for the signs are terrible! See how you've mixed the women's and children's clothes with the men's! Did you ever know that sign to fail to bring misfortune?

*Emilia*

My mistress laughs at signs. Only yesterday

I shivered to hear her mock at the fortuneteller for predicting sorrow.

*Bianca*

Did you ever know, I say, of misfortune's not coming when the women's and children's clothes get mixed with the men's?

*Emilia (troubled)*

There's but one thing I can do, *Bianca*. Those candles I was meaning to burn to keep some one faithful, I 'll offer for my Lady Viviana instead !

*Bianca*

That would be wise.

(Enter from the left, Conte di Sensoli preceded by his servant, Giacomo, who clears the way. The Count walks with bent head and general appearance of abstraction. The loungers make way in surly fashion. Some children, whose play is interrupted, begin to cry. The Count is admitted by Beppo to the Villa d'Alessi.)

*Tessa* (on a roof-garden, to her neighbor, on a balcony across the alley.)

Signior Valente is a patient wooer.

*Maddalena* (on her balcony)

That Signior Valente in the pall-colored

garb? Not he! This Sir Pensieroso is the elder brother, as like Sir Allegro as a shadow is like the real image in the sun. This sombre one's the Count, and wonderfully rich, but who could marry a shadow!

*Tessa*

I marked the difference. The same features, only sallow-hued and glum. Not Signior Valente's stride or his smile, as if the thing he looked on was the thing he liked best.

*Maddalena*

That's the man precisely. — And his looks range everywhere.

*Niccolo (a lounger)*

It's a rare sight to see Conte di Sensoli in the streets. A year ago he was prominent enough in council. I've heard him speak in this very square, promising good laws and plenty to the poor. Now we are threatened with a corn famine, and what does he do to advise us? They say he will dole out gold when urged, but what's the value of gold when there's no corn to buy? Yet he called himself a "lover of Perusia."

*Guido (another lounger)*

A lover of Perusia! Curse him! His sleek varlet would have jostled me into the street if

I had not been braced. It's we folks that have no grand masters that feel the pinch most. This Felice, the Marchese's lazy gardener, is fat enough!

*Tessa*

I have thought it was time he went for the settlement. But it was the other brother I have seen.

*Maddalena (as Tristan and the Marchese appear on the balcony)*

We shall soon know what to think.

*(They gesture to each other their surmises during the conversation between the Marchese and the Count.)*

*Marchese*

Shall we talk here?

*Tristan*

The rest is briefly put.

In this respect I hold myself most happy,  
That to the Lady's rank and loveliness  
Her virtue can be comparable. I thank you,  
That you are pleased, my Lord, to rate as worthy  
The name of Countess that I offer her.

*Marchese*

The name Sensoli is a warrant,—further,  
My sister is inclined to you.

*Tristan*

An honor

That I had not presumed or estimated.

*Marchese*

To be honest, Sir, one of your family  
Seemed like to win her,—young Signior Valente,  
Who will come wooing here weekdays and  
Sundays,

Morning, noon, and night!

*Tristan*

A hot Perusian,

Forever in the saddle or on his knees  
Before a lady or a shrine. The boy  
Is dear to me,—but duty to my house  
Constrains my marriage. He would fling away  
His life for a gauntlet on his wedding morn.

*Marchese (hesitating)*

They are both young and blithe.

*Tristan*

Fear not for her,

Although she leaves the gallant for the recluse.  
My pensive life among my books shall cast  
No shade on her. Can I not value hope  
And gaiety although I have it not?

*Marchese*

Youth is still yours. Why will you waste its zest

In self-appointed exile? We have missed you  
In council-room and market-place.

*Tristan (pointing to the crowd in the square)*

To lift this inert mass?

*Marchese*

Let not your pique  
At being foiled the first time hinder you  
From future benefactions. Pardon me,  
I was your prophet and you willed to fail me.

*Tristan*

Not wilfully but out of desperation.

Oh, I have had my dreams! I thought to right  
The world. The glorious, idle dreams of youth!  
But better men than I have failed, and Vice  
Goes by unchallenged, and Holiness is reviled  
And stoned by the rabble. I am done with the  
world!

(*A beggar climbs up on the balcony, holding  
out his hand.*)

*Pietro (the beggar)*

Alms, for the love of God! Only a penny!  
(Whispering) Listen, you that call yourself the  
lover  
Of Perusia!

*Tristan*

Take your alms and be off again!

*Pietro (whispering)*

Listen. I know a scheme to aid the city  
From threatened famine.

(*Aloud*) One penny more, good Signior !  
*Marchese*

Your kinsman hath the zeal ; unite your wit,  
That so Perusia's fortunes may be owed  
To the name Sensoli.

*Tristan*

I tell you, I am done  
With bickerings and shifts and bargainings  
And counter-plots!

*Pietro (whispering)*

For the sake of Perusia, hear me!

*Tristan (as he strikes down the beggar's hand)*  
(*To the Marchese*) I owe no duty to my state  
except

To keep myself untainted.

*Marchese (watching Pietro as he clammers down)*

That's a bold beggar.

He puts twopenny value on his neck !

(*Looking down the street.*)

My sister is approaching; she's attended  
By Signior Valente.

*Tristan*

Shall we sign the papers?

(*They enter the house. A beggar approaches*

*a monk in a brown robe who has been going from one to another exhorting them, and is now being teased by some little boys.)*

*Juniper (the monk)*

Let be, let be, you little rogues!

*Giovanni (the second beggar)*

Alms for the love of the Cross you wear!

*Juniper*

Alas, I have nothing to give thee, dear Brother. The Brothers of my House will not leave anything lying around, for they say I would give everything away, and I am expressly forbidden to give any part of my habit away. But stay—I have thought of a scheme! If thou shouldst take my cloak off my back, that would not be giving it away!

(*He leans over and the beggar pulls off the cloak.*)

*Guido*

Do not rob him. He is a simple good fellow that knows nothing but cobbling.—What will you say to your Superior, good Brother?

*Juniper*

I'll say a good man took my cloak and ran off with it.

(*He speeds Giovanni, who runs off. Mean-*

*while Viviana has entered, left, with her Duenna and Valente. He scatters the children by throwing pennies for which they scramble. He must bow right and left to acknowledge salutations.)*

*Maddalena*

Now, then, do you see any difference?

*Tessa*

Else I should have a gourd's head on my shoulders! But look, Maddalena, the lady is ill-pleased or indifferent.

*Maddalena*

What can you argue from indifferent looks!  
This is baffling.

*Viviana (stopping before the flower booth)*

No camellias this morning? I would give five soldi for camellias for a shrine.

*Sofia (the flower-seller)*

There's not a camellia in Perusia this morning, Lady. But here are tube-roses. They say that tube-roses are like incense to the Madonna.

*(Viviana buys the tube-roses and goes in with Valente and the Duenna. Enter, right, a flower-girl accompanied by a woman who carries a baby strapped upon her back.)*

*Innocenza (the flower-girl)*

Let us go home. My basket will not be noticed here.

*Sofia*

My good girl, let me see your camellias; I would give two soldi for camellias to deck a shrine. How much for this little bunch?

*Innocenza*

Two soldi.

*Maria (her companion, nudging her)*

Innocenza, that is the finest bunch you have.  
— Three soldi, she says.

*Sofia*

Holy Virgin! Three soldi for camellias that are wanted to deck a shrine! Would you rob the Lord Almighty himself?

*Felice (approaching)*

My mistress would give four soldi for camellias, as Sofia knows.

*Maria*

These came from Assisi and are very fine.

*Felice*

My mistress would give five soldi for camellias from Assisi.

*Innocenza*

A soldo for yourself, Sir.

*Felice*

Five is the least she would deign to give.  
And she loves especially the golden asters that  
bloom earliest in Assisi.

*Innocenza (eagerly)*

A few weeks more and they will be in bloom.

*Felice*

I know. Each spring I must search the coun-  
tryside.

*Sofia*

My mistress likes tube-roses best. She  
bought all mine this morning.

*Felice (turning his back on Sofia and drawing  
Innocenza aside)*

How much richer is Assisi than Perusia in  
golden asters and golden tresses ! It enraptures  
me to picture how golden earrings would set  
off those tresses !

*Maria (whispering to Innocenza)*

He offers you gold, the bridegroom's gift!

(Meanwhile Viviana and Valente have ap-  
peared on the balcony.)

*Viviana*

Why will you weary me with being importunate?  
I am complaisant to your jesting always.  
You know the mood that pleases.

*Valente*

I would teach you

What pleases me.

*Viviana (turning from him)*

The square is brisk to-day;  
Trading and gossip;—you will feed the glut-  
tons  
With savory morsels.

*Pietro (clambering up again)*

Alms! (*Whispering.*) For the love of Perusia,  
Listen this time.

*Valente (gravely)*

You may not ask me twice

In Perusia's name.

*Pietro*

Oh, now you are awakened!  
You are nobler now with loveliness at your  
side!—

Pardon, your worship, I never spake with  
you

Before. 'T was some ignoble noble spurned  
me!

*Valente (courteously)*

Be brief. What is your claim?

*Pietro*

O gentle sir,

Believe me in despite of all my rags.  
'T is my necessity that makes me keen.  
A farmer of Foligno hath made known  
To me how corn can be procured.

*Valente (sharply)*

The means?

*Pietro*

Your worship knows the long-time enmity,  
Shrinking from war, Foligno entertains  
Against our city.

*Valente*

Yes. What then?

*Pietro*

Last year

At planting time and harvest many men  
Were drawn to war. Whereat Foligno mer-  
chants,  
Anticipating famine in the spring  
For us, bought up the Umbrian corn and  
now,

When we're in need, Foligno will not sell,  
Pretending scarcity of their own crops.  
He, my informant, being overheard,  
Was flung in prison. I myself escaped.  
To-night they burn the stores lest hated Perusia  
Should come to buy!

*Valente (rising)*

We 'll go a-marketing.

(*They whisper together. Valente puts a chain about the beggar's neck.*)

*Viviana*

Haggling over an alms? Here, Master Nimble,  
The fee you 'll need for the apothecary !

(*He clammers down with difficulty and waving his hand to Signior Valente blows the whistle on the chain. There is at once a stir in the square. Armed men come running in, to whom the beggar communicates his news.*)

*Valente*

My answer! I must have it now! My sword  
Shall not be drawn again till thou hast blest it.  
My answer!

*Viviana*

Sir, I lack the wit to guess  
The answer till I 've heard the question. Since  
You seem in haste, I 'd stay you not. Farewell.

(*She extends her hand. Meanwhile the square has filled with soldiers. One leads a charger to the door of the Villa d'Alessi. Valente motions for his horse to be led beneath the balcony. He steps upon the parapet.*)

*Valente (calling)*

Are there any hungry here?

*The Crowd*

I! I! My children!

*Valente*

Who 'll go a-marketing with me?

*The Troop*

Here, Captain!

*Valente (looking back with a swift, devoted gaze,  
then leaping down)*

God and Saint Laurence for Perusia!

*Viviana (looking ruefully at her outstretched  
hand)*

A gallant lover!

(*The Duenna comes out.*)

*Duenna*

What's all this broil about?

*Viviana*

Your hero 's grown domestic,—gone to market,  
He said.

*Duenna (looking after the soldiers)*

You let him go unanswered?

*Viviana*

Look

At this foolish hand outstretched for him to  
kiss.

*Duenna*

I can make nothing of this. Where are your eyes?

*Viviana*

There never was a school-girl more in love  
With soldier's glitterings than thou.

*Duenna*

We love

The soldier not that he goes forth to slay,  
But haply to be slain. You are a child;  
Do riches touch your heart?

*Viviana (thoughtfully)*

Who knows what touches  
The heart?

*Duenna*

Dear child, I'll pray you may be happy.  
(*She goes in. The Count comes out on the balcony. Viviana greets him with frank pleasure.*)

*Felice (leading Innocenza to the balcony)*

Mistress, here are fine camellias.

(*He climbs up a little way, holding out the basket, which Tristan takes.*)

*Sofia*

Folks of queer manners come out of Assisi.  
Bold hussies and mad friars. We all know  
Francesco Bernadone for a roisterer.

*Innocenza (fiercely)*

He is a holy saint!

*Tristan (returning the basket without taking out any flowers, but putting a coin into Felice's hand)*

They are all too pale or sickly sweet for thee.

A flower that's all a vivid gaiety,

Nor hides its crimson heart in paler petals,

Nor languishes upon its stem, but glances

In every breeze. A poppy in the grass!

(*To Innocenza*) Bring me red poppies and you shall be rich.

*Innocenza*

The first red poppies shall be hers, your worship.

*Viviana*

Buy poor Sofia's flowers. They are hungry here,  
And she loves Felice.

(*Tristan gives more money to Felice, pointing to Sofia. Felice does the errand with a grimace.*)

See, your tube-roses

Are better than camellias for my shrine.

*Tristan*

It suits my lady's pleasure to be indulgent.

Why do you look so fondly on this scene?

Dwelling on some fair picture in the mind?

*Viviana*

Is it not bright and beautiful to see?  
The little children earnest at their games ;  
The idlers basking, gossips sedulous,  
Grandmothers benevolent, the bargainers  
Out complimenting one another ; then  
A moment ere you came, the thrill and lift  
Of brave, impetuous men ! Only you  
Are calm and wiser ! (*With averted gaze.*) Lastly  
you may see

The rueful, unregarded monk.

*Tristan**The measure*

Of my lady's charms I had not found ; — she's  
grown  
Philosophical. In that I may make claim  
To teach you much.

*Viviana*

Why, Sir, doth it require  
Philosophy to see what is plain, and love ?

*Tristan*

By your sweet blindness you may not discern  
Greed and deception, sloth, the menace lurking  
In beauty of age's ugliness. Ah, now  
I have dimmed your vision more myself who  
would

Cherish your gaiety, for I am sad!  
Forget those words and praise my simile!  
This brooch I wear to mind me of the child  
I was — I found this topaz hidden away  
In a secret drawer whose spring my prying hand  
Had chanced upon. Oh, wonder, for within  
Must burn a magic fire! It harmed me not,  
Yet it blazed fiercer than firelight!

*Viviana*

Silly child!

Quaint philosopher!

*Tristan*

Day after day

I drew it, trembling, from its hiding-place,  
My breast. Some day, I said, it cannot fail  
To burn to ashes. So I true believed.

*Viviana*

The round-eyed rogue!

*Tristan*

But never the jewel failed  
To flash in the sun. And now I know my jewel,  
Because it is a jewel, must glow forever!  
Now for my simile —

*Viviana (anticipating)*

Philosophy

Came late with me. This gem, the mate of yours,

I bade my mother hoard till I was grown  
And could wear it in a ring. All vanity !

*Tristan (urgent)*

Even as Lady Viviana's destined  
To be the Child of Joy. Wouldst thou hear more  
Of similes ?

*Viviana*

Your rhetoric is skilful !

*Juniper (demanding to be heard)*

Dearly beloved, flee from the world and put  
away sin ! Render to others their due if you  
would escape from Hell ; follow the command-  
ments of God to love God and your neighbor,  
if ye would possess the kingdom of Heaven.  
Dearly beloved, flee from the world.

*Tristan*

A sombre interruption. Yet the man  
Kindles the fancy ! Ecstasy in rags !  
There may be matter in this frenzy worth  
My study.

*Viviana*

As philosopher I 'd rate you  
Beneath the poet !

*Tristan*

Come, the simile.

(*They go in together.*)

*Maddalena*

She never listened so long to Signior Valente,  
God keep him !

*A Perusian (running in)*

Why are you not all at the gate? Our troop  
is marching. Shall we speed them with our  
prayers?

*The People in the Square*

Yes, to the gate. Our deliverers!

(Soon the square is emptied and the people  
at windows and on balconies and roof-  
gardens have disappeared. Enter from  
the left a youth carrying a cage of turtle-  
doves. He looks about the empty square  
with disappointment. He sets the cage  
upon the counter and rests. You can hear  
the voice of a street-singer. Soon he ap-  
pears, a brown-clad friar. As he comes  
down the alley he looks up at the houses,  
singing to them. The youth spies him and  
hastens with alacrity to greet a possible  
customer. The friar blocks the alley with  
his arm. You can see the phases of the  
interview; astonishment, chagrin, disap-  
pointment, contrition, satisfaction on the  
part of the youth. He returns the way

*be bad come. The friar enters the square, bearing the bird-cage. He looks about the empty square, resuming his song. Then he passes out, singing, and as he goes, releasing the birds from the cage.)*

*The Friar*

My heart's aflame with love !

My heart's aflame with love !

CURTAIN

## *DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

TRISTAN, CONTE DI SENSOLI      }  
VALENTE, his brother                } to be played by one actor

VIVIANA

FELICE, a gardener, her servant

INNOCENZA, a peasant girl of Assisi

LUIGI, MARCHESE D'ALESSI, brother to VIVIANA

VIVIANA'S DUENNA

BIANCA      }  
EMILIA        } servants to the MARCHESE  
BEPO

GIACOMO, servant to CONTE DI SENSOLI

MADDALENA      }  
TESSA          } gossiping neighbors

NICCOLO      }  
GUIDO        } loungers

PIETRO, a beggar

GIOVANNI, another beggar

SOFIA, a flower-seller

GABRIELLA      }  
ANGIOLA        } peasant girls of Perusia

## xxxii DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARIA, *Come from Assisi to trade*

*Bargainers, gossips, loungers, children in the square at Perusia*

FATHER FRANCESCO, *the Little Poor Man*

BROTHER LEO

BROTHER PAOLO, *the little Boy-brother*

BROTHER JUNIPER, *A Cobbler, "the plaything of Jesu Christ"*

BROTHER GILES, *the Reasoner*

BROTHERS SIMON, MASSEO, THE SACRISTAN, and other Brothers

TWO LITTLE BOYS OF ASSISI

SISTER CLARE

SISTER INNOCENZA, *the youngest of the nuns, and other Sisters*

PROLOGUE. *Scene: a public square in Perusia*

ACT I. *Scene: the kitchen of the Portiuncula at Assisi*

ACT II. *Scene: the garden of the Villa d' Alessi*

ACT III. *Scene 1: a cross-roads in the fields near Assisi*

*Scene 2: the garden at Saint Damian's*

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# Love in Umbria

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## ACT I

---

SCENE: *Kitchen of the House of Portiuncula at Assisi.* BROTHER JUNIPER, with great zeal and show of busyness, is building a great fire, left. BROTHER PAOLO is sweeping. On a pallet, right, half reclines a sick man, TRISTAN, CONTE DI SENSOLI.

*Juniper*

THIS kitchen is the room of all the House  
Wherein the Devil works mischief. Here I stay,  
Wasting the time that I might spend in prayer  
On things to tempt our lustful appetites.  
I have bethought me how this grievous sin  
May be avoided.

(Without some one knocks timidly. The Brothers cease their work and kneel, praying silently. The knock is repeated more boldly; then a third knock, impatient.)

*Juniper (rising)*

We should be prepared,  
Having repeated thrice the Pater Noster,  
To greet the stranger.—In the name of God,  
Enter!

(*He admits, rear, two little boys; one carrying chickens tied by the legs; the other laden with kettles swung over his shoulders as well as in his hands.*)

*Juniper*

God save you, little friends! Ye come  
Just on the hour. God shall reward you  
both

For service greater than ye understand.  
Hast thou no greeting, Brother Paolo?

*Paolo (shyly)*

The Lord give you His peace.

*Elder Boy (staring at Paolo)*

We may not stay.

It was forbid.

*Juniper*

Well spoken, little son.

I would not hinder thine obedience.  
Another time. Which is the elder, thou?  
Then take this silver bell into thy charge.  
If trouble come to either, thou shalt find

The value of it. Fare ye well, my sons.  
Fear God and obey your mother!

(*They go out, reluctant, wondering. As they pass Paolo, the younger thrusts a handful of chestnuts into the Little Brother's hand.*)

*Younger Boy (to Elder)*

Does he play

Like us?

*Elder Boy*

Hush, he must pray!

*Younger Boy*

What puts that shine

Into his eyes?

*Elder Boy*

Hush, mother says the angels  
Speak in his ear! (*The door closes after them.*)

*Paolo (glowing)*

Oh, look! All these for me!

(*To Tristan.*) Oh, Sir, if thou couldst eat them—

*Tristan*

No, my child.

But let me see you feast. Your little cheek  
Is not too round.—Good Brother, pray explain.  
Do you prepare a royal banquet here?

*Juniper*

Hast thou not guessed my plan? I have ar-  
ranged

This morning to prepare abundant food  
To last a fortnight. For I count it sin  
If but one Brother stay away from prayers.  
I went about and begged the food and pots.

*Tristan*

A noble task!

*Juniper*

But one thing now I lack,  
An herb that groweth in the meadow near.  
Brother Paolo shall tend thee whilst I go  
To gather it. Hast need of anything?

*Tristan (wearily)*

Of nothing. I will call our little Brother  
If there be need.

*Juniper (bending over the sick man)*

Still far too pale and wan,  
Yet marvellously hast thou mended since  
That sorry day I found thee on the ground,  
Flung from thy horse. 'T was God's own blessed  
hand

That led thee hither.

*Tristan*

So I should believe,  
Dear Brother.

*Juniper*

Peace unto this House.

*Tristan and Paolo*

Farewell.

(*As Juniper puts on his cloak, Paolo runs up to him, pulling at his cloak.*)

*Paolo*

Dear Brother Juniper, be very careful !  
Remember thou hast been forbidden to give  
Any part of thy habit away. This cloak is ragged  
And the air is chill to-day. Let no one take  
Anything away from thee, or else the Guardian  
Will chide !

*Juniper*

Fear not, my little Guardian !

(*He goes out, rear. Tristan seeming to be asleep, Paolo roasts his chestnuts at the fire, singing softly.*)

*Paolo (singing)*

Little Brother Fish,  
Beware the wriggling worm !  
The fisher too is hungry,  
I saw his cruel hook.  
I speak as thy brother,  
Little Brother Fish.

Little Sister Ant,  
Why such foolish haste ?

Fear not for the morrow,  
The Lord will provide !  
I speak as thy brother,  
Little Sister Ant.

Little Sister Bird,  
Spread thy shining wings.  
Fly for me from North to South,  
From East to West, and make the  
Cross !  
I love thee as thy brother,  
Little Sister Bird !

(Tristan *stirs*. Paolo *runs to him*.)  
*Paolo*

Oh, Sir, thou couldst have slept but for my  
song,  
And I, thy nurse !

*Tristan*

No, boy, I cannot sleep.

Sit here, our Little Brother-to-the-sick.  
Come closer, so. Do you find happiness  
Here in this House, and never long to play  
With village children ?

*Paolo*

Nay, I am happy here :  
I work and pray and sing. Hast thou no work ?

*Tristan*

Yes, to be brain and will for a hundred oafs  
Who earn their bread of me; whereby more  
    beggars  
Are born into the world.

*Paolo*

Our Father saith  
Whoever benefits God's poor is blest  
A thousand thousand fold.

*Tristan*

'T is only death  
Can aid the poor.

*Paolo*

We all do pray for death—

*Tristan*

Ah, hush, my child —

*Paolo*

May I not speak? I wish  
That thou wouldest teach me how to hold thy  
    sword.

Dost thou wear it thus? Our Little Father  
saith

Some men may fight, but we are men of peace.  
Look how it gleams!

*Tristan*

Aye, for the stains of blood

Were cleansèd long ago. Men say the Count  
Disdains to fight; they dare not say he dares not.  
This gleaming thing is symbol of revenge.  
Your tender hands shall not be sullied.

*Paolo*

Nay,

I was 'ware of the blade.

*Tristan*

Come, put away the sword,  
But ask whatever else you will.

*Paolo*

I wish

That I might touch this great golden jewel  
Thou wearest on thy hand.

*Tristan*

Why, you shall wear it.

*Paolo*

Oh, Sir, how beautiful ! The Brothers say  
Thou must be rich, and Brother Elias said,  
“ Perchance he'll give some money to the  
Order.”

*Tristan*

What said the others ?

*Paolo*

Brother Leo said,  
“ Are we not named the Order of Poor Brothers ?

"I pray he 'll give his heart unto the Order."

"Amen," said Brother Juniper, and I  
And all the rest spake likewise. How much gold  
Didst thou have to give to buy this jewel?

*Tristan*

None.

It was a gift, exchanged.

*Paolo*

How thou must love  
The giver!

*Tristan*

Golden as the gem and flashing.

(*The bell rings for Sext. The murmur of the antiphons may be heard; the voice of Little Brother Paolo, shrill and sweet, rises above the other voices as they recite the Salutation to the Virtues.*)

*Paolo and the Brothers (unseen)*

Hail, Queen Wisdom! The Lord save thee  
with thy holy sister, pure Simplicity. O holy  
Lady Poverty, may the Lord save thee with  
thy holy sister Humility. O holy Lady Charity,  
may the Lord save thee with thy holy sister,  
Obedience. O all ye most holy virtues, may the  
Lord, from whom ye proceed, save you.

Amen.

*Paolo (rising from his knees)*

Oh, take it back! I fingered it in my prayer.  
'T is a great sin!

*Tristan*

No sin, you foolish boy —

*Paolo*

I will confess. Father Francesco knows  
How I was tempted. Once he carved a vase  
Of wood, and when he said the prayers for  
Tierce,  
He thought a moment of the vase. "Since  
this,"  
Quoth he, "hath power to stop the sacrifice  
" Of praise that I was offering to the Lord,  
" It shall be sacrificed." Gems are a snare,  
And all beautiful things.

*Tristan*

Would you not see  
The wonders I have seen : fine palaces  
And armored knights and lovely little maids  
Fairer than angels ?

*Paolo*

Nay, what I have seen  
Is yet more wonderful.

*Tristan*

How, starry eyes?

What hast thou seen, the which remembered  
brings

That flush — the radiance of the acolyte  
Bearing the sacred taper?

*Paolo (hesitating at first, but reassured by Tristan's smile)*

On a night

When Father Francesco lay by me, I tied  
My cord to his, because I wished to know  
Whither he goes by night. For I had marked  
How after Compline he doth lay him down;  
But at the midnight, whilst the others sleep,  
He riseth up. So waking from a dream  
Of him, I found the cord unloosed, and rose  
And went in search of him, and in a field  
I found him, rapt in prayer. I knelt beside,  
Touching his cloak, and it was cold and dark.  
*(In ecstasy)* But presently a marvellous light  
from Heaven —

Oh, brighter than the sun — shone all about!  
And in that glory I beheld our Lord  
And Mary Mother and the blessed John  
With a multitude of angels: and they spake  
Unto my Father. Blinded by that light  
I swooned and fell upon the ground, and there  
He must have found me when the vision faded.

And next I felt the warmth of his own breast.  
 For then our Father lifted me  
 And bore me homeward tenderly :  
 Resting in his arms, asleep,  
 As doth the Shepherd with His sheep.

*Tristan (when at length the boy has remembered  
 his presence)*

Only the pure in heart shall see God.  
 The vision hath been hidden from my sight.

*Paolo*

Oh, Sir, thou art a noble gentleman !  
 'T is thou and Brother Juniper I love  
 After our Little Father. That is why  
 I grieve when thou art suffering and when  
 Thou chidest me, for I do ever try  
 To please thee.

*Tristan*

Child, the fault is mine. Thy dream  
 Was " yet more wonderful " than palaces  
 And knights and little maidens.

*Paolo*

It was true !

(Enter Juniper, rear, with a bunch of herbs. His cassock is ungirdled. Paolo inspects him anxiously.)

*Juniper (briskly)*

All 's well ? Now, little one, thy task is done.  
 Haste to thy prayers.

*Paolo*

Oh, Brother, where's thy cord?  
I almost know the Guardian will be angry!

*Juniper*

But who would call a cord a part of one's habit?  
A poor man lacked a rope to lead his cow!

(*Paolo goes out, reluctant, right.*)

*Tristan*

I am persuaded — almost — to remain  
Here with you always, so that I may learn  
Simplicity from you, and charity.

*Juniper*

Ah, not from me! I am the worst of men!  
But from the Little Poor Man. He can speak  
So thou wouldest be persuaded to renounce  
All worldly pleasures. When he shall return  
All will be well!

(*Tristan falls asleep. Juniper puts all the pots on the fire. He drops in eggs in their shells and chickens with their feathers on. The fire being fierce, he ties a plank to his body and so leaps from pot to pot, skimming the stew. Enter Brother Leo, right. They greet each other silently for Juniper signals that Tristan is asleep. Leo is amazed at the many pots and the great*

*fire. He lifts a lid and puts it down hastily, holding his nose.)*

*Leo*

It is a wedding feast  
Methinks thou art preparing.

*Juniper*

Thou shalt see!

*Leo*

Our invalid, is he to have his share?

*Juniper*

Nay, 't is too rich for him; but here's fresh milk.  
(Enter, right, Brother Simon. *He too marvels at the cooking, making signs of amazement to Leo.*)

*Juniper*

The stew is cooked. Now I will ring the bell.

(*When he has rung the bell, many of the Brothers pass, from rear to right, through the kitchen to the refectory. Juniper carries in one of the pots and is heard crying*)

*Juniper*

Eat well and then to prayers. No one need think  
Of cooking for a fortnight.

*Leo (hastily)*

I will stay

To tend this gentleman.

*Simon (hurrying away, rear)*

And I must go

To guard the altar that the Sacristan  
May eat, which Brother Juniper hath done  
This morning.

(*Leo feeds Tristan, who has been roused by  
the bell.*)

*Leo*

Milk is better food for thee.

(*Presently the Sacristan burries through the  
kitchen to the refectory.*)

*Sacristan (muttering)*

Never again shall Brother Juniper  
Be left on guard! Two silver bells are gone,  
Torn from the altar cloth; and one, I know,  
Given to a beggar woman!

*Tristan (to Leo)*

I could tell

To whom the other one was given.

*Leo*

I fear

Dear Brother Juniper must suffer for this;  
But he taketh joy in suffering.

*Tristan*

Such joy

Is all you know, who dwell within this House.

And yet you bear you like to men that find  
The secret of joy.

*Leo*

Our Father taught us how  
To find the perfect joy.

*Tristan*

Then, in God's name,  
I pray you tell me how.

*Leo*

Right willingly.

Whenas our Little Father and his son  
Were journeying from Perusia in winter  
Unto Saint Mary's, and were sore distressed  
From cold and rain and hunger; then said he:  
“O Brother Leo, little lamb, wouldst know  
“Wherein is perfect joy?” “Right gladly,  
Father.”

“If haply when we reach Saint Mary's door,  
“The porter cry in anger, ‘Get you gone.  
“Ye be two rogues!’ and when we knock  
again,  
“He rush upon us with a knotty stick;  
“Then if we bear such slander and abuse  
“Right patiently, nay, even with delight,  
“From thinking on the wounds of Jesu Christ,  
“Therein is perfect joy!”

*Tristan*

Alas for me!

I am unworthy. In my heart I know  
 I would have seized that stick and beaten him  
 With all the knots thereof!

*Leo*

I pray thy soul

May be redeemed from such unrighteousness.  
 Canst thou instruct me how to find a joy  
 Intenser?

*Tristan*

Each man's is superlative  
 To him.

*Leo (doubtfully)*

And thine?

*Tristan*

I shine but by reflection.

*Leo*

The Count Sensoli's name shineth in Umbria  
 By its own lustre.

*Tristan (with a shrug)*

You have lived in the world,  
 You know how soon a man perforce exhausts  
 The adventures of our life: love, war, domin-  
 ion;  
 Recoiling on the world of thought.

*Leo*

Aspiring

To the world of spirit.

*Tristan*

If you name it so.

*Leo*

Dominion tempted thee?

*Tristan*

Must I be taught

A second time the market price of honor?

*Leo*

And war hath sickened thee?

*Tristan*

Two ravening hosts

Each claiming God for General!

*Leo*

One thing

Remaineth—art thou free from passion's fetters?

*Tristan* (*laying one hand over the other*)I owe a duty to my house—moreover,  
I would not tarnish her most perfect joy.  
Think you to hoard it all? And as for me,  
'T is sweet to own a jewel always flashing—*Leo*

Gems are a snare!

*Tristan*

— Whene'er I have the will  
 To gloat on it. (*His hands fall apart.*)

*Leo*

Brother, what of her soul?  
 Yet thou wouldst tarnish that?

*Tristan*

Pardon me, Sir,  
 Your zeal is indiscreet.

*Leo*

Discretion is  
 Anathema unto the Brothers Minor.  
 But I forget thy weak estate. 'Tis prayer  
 Thou needest rather than monition. Rest  
 And be content. Wilt thou not drink again?

(*Tristan takes the cup again from Leo.*

*Brothers Ruffino and Masseo pass  
 through the kitchen, from right to rear.*)

*Masseo*

Eggs in their shells and fowls unplucked!  
 Didst see  
 The anger of the Guardian? Quoth he,  
 "There is no pig in all the land of Rome  
 "So famished as to eat this stew!"

*Ruffino*

Dear fool,  
 This is his day of trouble:

*Tristan (to Leo)*

How is this?

*Leo*

Didst thou not mark how he prepared the stew?

*Tristan*

I was asleep.

*Leo*

'T was even as they said.

*Tristan*

Dear blessed fool! 'T would be a noble task,  
He thought.

*Leo*

In truth his aim is always noble.

*Tristan*

Now, tell me, Brother Leo, in good faith,  
Did you fast right willingly?

*Leo*

Right willingly.

(*They check their laughter as Juniper enters,  
very dejected; attended by Paolo, who  
watches him wistfully.*)

*Leo*

He cometh, sad of look. I will depart,  
For he would be alone. To-morrow I  
Am sent unto Perusia and will bear  
A message to thy kinsman of thy gain  
In strength and ease.

*Tristan*

I thank you, Brother Leo.

(*Leo goes out, right, without speaking to Juniper. The latter seats himself in a corner and begins to mix a mess of flour, assisted by Paolo, who is eager to help.*)

*Tristan*

Dear Brother, do not look so sad.

*Juniper*

Alas !

I am the worst of men ! One was condemned  
To lose his eyes, another to be hanged  
For evil deeds ; far more do I deserve  
For wasting many of the useful things  
Of God and of the Order.

*Paolo*

Say not so !

Dost not remember what our Father said ?  
“I need a forest of such Junipers !”

*Juniper*

Dear lamb !

*Paolo*

’T is true ! He spake before us all.

(Enter the Guardian.)

*Guardian*

How farest thou to-day, good sir ?

*Tristan*

Right well.

I lack not with such care. I thought to rise  
To-day — I would not tax your kindness  
more.

*Guardian*

Nay, Sir, such haste were dangerous. Accept  
Our humble care, I pray.

(*Juniper kneels before Guardian, offering the  
bowl of pottage.*)

*Juniper*

O Guardian,  
When thou reproachedst me, thou didst shout  
so loud  
That thou wert hoarse ; remarking which I made  
This pottage, excellent for swollen throats.  
I pray thee, taste.

*Guardian*

What now, O foolish one ?  
Dost think to offer me another dish ?  
How many times hast thou deserved reproach  
To-day ? Thy cord is lost, the altar robbed  
Of silver bells, another waste of food !

*Paolo (loudly to Tristan)*

As soon as Father Francis comes, he 'll grieve  
That Poor Men trim the altar with such gauds !

*Juniper*

I thank thee for these words, O Guardian.  
 Reproach is sweet. But eat thy pottage, pray,  
 For it will ease thy throat: 't was made for thee.

(Guardian *refuses by an angry gesture.*)

Then if thou wilt not, I'll refresh myself  
 For I am faint.

(*He begins to eat the pottage. The Guardian marvels at the many pots on the dead fire.*)

*Guardian*

Oh, what unprofitable  
 And foolish work! Yet was he edified  
 And thought to serve us. Now how meek his  
 look,  
 His face all red from toiling! Brother dear,  
 Since thou wouldest have it so, we two will  
 eat

Together. (*He sits down by Juniper.*)

*Juniper (when they have finished)*

Art refreshed?

*Guardian*

Aye, of a truth,  
 By thy devotion am I more refreshed  
 Than by the food. Thy penance shall be light.

*Juniper*

I pray thee, make it hard, O Guardian!

*Guardian*

If haply that the Father do return  
To-night, thou shalt confess thy fault to him.

(*Guardian goes out, right.*)

*Juniper*

Oh, Sir, he saith the Father may return  
To-night! Then shall my heart be comforted  
And all this House shall thankfully rejoice.  
He too hath known reproach and shame and  
sin,

And he is ever mindful of our pain.

*Tristan*

The man you term "The Father," is not he  
Son of the merchant Bernadone? One  
Scorned by his father, driven from his home,  
Men say?

*Juniper*

'Tis true. Rejected and despised  
Even as One other.

*Tristan*

But his youth  
Was sinful.

*Juniper*

Dissolute and idle; first  
In wicked daring of Assisi's knights.  
Ah, he whom thou shalt see is bent and worn!

His face is pinched, yet lovely to our eyes.  
 A face that children smile at ; all the birds  
 Answer his call ; even the beasts of the field  
 Fawn at his feet, begging for his caress.

*Tristan*

But what have I to do with such as he?

*Juniper*

He giveth hope to all that are in sin.  
 "None need despair," quoth he, "since I have  
 turned  
 "From sins so grievous."

*Tristan*

He would count my sin  
 Of doubt most grievous.

*Juniper*

Hark thou, friend, it is  
 The Devil prompts these doubts !

(Enter Brother Giles, right)

Here cometh one  
 That reasons shrewdly. Tell thy doubt to him,  
 That he may cast it out.

*Tristan*

Then, Brother Giles,  
 In all your reasoning, have you found the  
 clue  
 Out of the maze ?

*Giles*

Is it not written plain?

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart—"

*Tristan*

Hear me!

No man's blood is on my hands,  
 No man's goods have I robbed,  
 Nor broken faith with man or maid!  
 You thought me a knave afraid to die?

*Giles*

Not so,

Perchance the Pharisee.

*Tristan*

Believe me, no.

Perplexed rather than proud. This world's a  
 maze

Wherein I lose myself.

*Giles*

There is a path,

'T is narrow, yea, but straight; obedience  
 Doth lead unto all good; the road to sin  
 Is disobedience. For if a Brother  
 Have given another promise to obey,  
 And it should hap, that whilst an angel spake  
 With him, the Brother should be summoned,  
 then

He ought to run to do obedience,  
 Leaving the angel. Like unto an ox  
 That boweth low beneath the yoke and thus  
 Tilleth the furrows straight ; in selfsame wise  
 The true Religious doth obey ; unyoked,  
 The ox would wander wide and so the fields  
 Be barren and untilled.

*Tristan*

I could not bow  
 Beneath a yoke of obedience !

*Juniper*

Blast this pride,  
 Lord Jesu, bend his stubborn heart till he  
 Shall bow beneath the yoke !

*Tristan*

I cannot, nay,

I will not !

*Juniper*

Struggle no more, my brother. God  
 Will send thee victory in His own time.  
 Be quiet now and sleep. Be not afraid.  
 God is thy guard, so if the tempter knock,  
 Safe in thy castle thou canst make reply,  
 " Begone ! the fortress is already ta'en,  
 " And no more folk may enter here within ! "

*Tristan (fretfully)*

Take off this velvet cloak. It burdens me.

*Juniper*

But none were dangerous.

(*He takes a cloak from a peg.*)

Spread over him

The Robe of Poverty !

*Tristan (smiling, unresisting)*

That being poor

In person, therefore God will grant me grace

To be poor in spirit ?

*Giles (coldly)*

We will pray to God

To work that miracle. And let me warn thee,  
Who wears this robe, puts it not lightly on.

(*Fervently*) For knowest thou not how it was  
consecrated ?

One was there in this evil land of Rome  
Who yearned to bear in his own flesh the  
pains

Of bleeding Christ. And when he stood alone,  
Reviled, stoned, shivering in the market-place,  
Out from the church-door came the Man of  
God,

Had pity and wrapped this robe about him.

We

Whom he hath chosen have a fair ensample,  
For God hath sent His own Poor Little One

To be the light of Umbria ! Yea, I  
 Will prophesy — this city set on a hill,  
 Assisi, light, shall justify its name ;  
 This hut become a shrine for far-off pilgrims ;  
 And our mean selves remembered since he  
     loved us,  
 Francesco, Little Poor Man !

*Tristan*

Strange is his sway,  
 For I have pondered much the lives of men,  
 Marvelled at many, loved a few, but none  
 Compelled me !

*Paolo*

Wilt thou stay and be my brother ?  
 Our Father comes to-night.

*Tristan (pushing the boy aside gently)*

You have my love  
 And gratitude as kindly hosts, but ask  
 No more. I am aweary.

*Juniper*

Little one,  
 Another bundle of fagots on the fire,  
 And then we'll leave our brother to his rest.

*Paolo*

But look ! What gleams here in the coals,  
     brighter

Than firelight? 'T is my lord's great golden  
jewel

He wears upon his hand. Oh, pity!

*Giles*

Beware!

The jewel will not burn, but thy soft fingers  
Would smart.

*Tristan*

The careless child was playing with it.

*Paolo*

Oh, Sir, I gave it back! It spoiled my prayer!

*Giles*

My Lord, it must have rolled away unfelt.

Thy hand is wasted.—To-morrow, little brother,  
Thou 'lt sweep it from the ashes.

*Juniper*

Oh, to think

How many poor that bauble would supply  
With food and raiment!

*Paolo*

But he loves the giver.

(*He embraces Tristan timidly.*)

I thank thee for thy scolding, it was sweet!

(*Tristan returns the caress, smiling.*)

*Juniper*

God give thee peace!

*Giles (as the three Brothers go out)*

Urge him no more. A dreamer  
Who hath no kin with Poor Men. He is dainty,  
And being sick, mistakes for piety  
His humor.

*Juniper*

Dare we deny one penitent?

(*They go out*)

(*The room has grown dim. The fire burns  
fitfully. A shaft of moonlight falls across  
the bed. Tristan stirs restlessly.*)

*Tristan*

So all my life were plain before me — prayer,  
Fasting, and labor, with a quiet heart;  
And over common things a poetry  
Like moonlight silvering a dusty road.  
What hath the world vouchsafed that I should  
shrink

To part therefrom? Riches, estate? But they  
Afford more leisure for that contemplation,  
The malady of ease! Who of my peers  
Delights me more than this quaint cobbler  
fellow?

Ah, they are wise, these simple folk that choose  
The way of peace! How dim the past has  
grown,

As if my life began within this House.  
Darkly I see Perusia's towers, my kindred,  
Dim save one vision burning on mine eyes,  
Her face! Those eyes alight and lips aflame  
And signal of my coming in her cheeks.  
A poppy glowing through the grass — she said,  
Being urged, that name pleased most. And is  
it nature

The poppy should take on the lily's hue?  
Or bridal raiment change to this dull garb?  
The Virgin bride of Christ! — Forgive me, Love,  
Thy jewel in the soot!

(*He strives to reach it, but falls back weakly.*  
*Without, some one is approaching, singing*  
*with poignant sweetness.)*

*The Voice*

My heart's aflame with love!  
My heart's aflame with love!  
My heart's aflame with love!

*Tristan (curious, thrilled)*

Who mocks them here?

*The Voice*

I wed a bridegroom new,  
The little lamb of love.  
When on the ring he drew  
He wounded me to prove

My heart can break in two.

Now I in prison move.

Now He hath conquered me,

All enmity doth cease

And love in verity

Attends upon our peace.

'T is Christ enamours me.

I am mighty through His grace.

My heart shall faithful be

To Christ who comforts me.

My heart's aflame with love!

*Tristan (sinking back)*

“Aflame with love!” ‘T is I who have been  
mocked!

(Enter, rear, through the moonlight a stranger in  
the habit of the Brothers Minor. The cowl  
bides his face. He bears in his arms a  
wounded bare. He moves softly to the pallet  
and bends over Tristan, questioning: then  
lifts the cloak, revealing the rich garments  
beneath. Believing Tristan to be asleep, he  
replaces the cloak gently. Then he makes a  
bed of straw by the fire for the bare.

*The Stranger (fondling the bare)*

Little Brother, why didst thou let thyself be  
caught

In the cruel trap? I have delivered thee  
And thou shalt be at ease. Be quiet now,  
Fluttering heart! Thy brother holds thee safe.  
*(He sings softly as he lays the hare upon its bed)*

My heart's aflame with love!

My heart's aflame with love!

My heart's aflame with love!

*Tristan (roused, watching the Stranger idly)*  
Ah, Tristan, Count Sensoli, can it be  
Thou wouldest endure to wear such dingy garb,  
Be shrunk to such mean stature, wear that look  
Of humble poverty?

*(As the Stranger kneels, the cowl falls from  
his face; and the fire, blazing suddenly,  
illumines the beauty of the Little Poor  
Man.)*

Ah, God, the face!

Who art thou?

*(Tristan staggers from his couch. Francesco  
springs to support him, greeting him with  
a kiss.)*

*Francesco*

Poor Little One of Jesu Christ,  
His Shepherd. Welcome, brother little sheep!

CURTAIN

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## ACT II

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(LADY VIVIANA and her duenna are walking in the garden. FELICE, the gardener, approaches with a bouquet of golden asters for his mistress. INNOCENZA is waiting bashfully at the gate.)

*Duenna*

WHY are you not content? I've heard you  
praise  
This garden, call it "Joy in Quietude,"  
"Dream o' the Heart," — more names than I  
remember;  
Yet now it irks you.

*Viviana*

I'll not be content  
With terraced lawns and cypress shade and urns  
Of cactus, whilst the fields are pied with flowers.  
Look where that line of white doth cut the green  
Of corn-fields ! 'T is acacia making sweet  
The highway to Assisi. Every hedge  
Is twined with honeysuckle ; cyclamen,

Campanula swinging its bells, pale clematis,  
Rosemary, violets perfume every hedge.

(Noticing Felice.) Ah, lad, thou knowest what  
I love! My flower

That with the nightingale doth bring in May.  
Where didst thou gather them?

*Felice*

It was not I—

*Viviana*

'T is not thy gift?

*Felice*

Dear lady, I told her how  
I bring thee every May the earliest blooms.  
She'll watch too for the earliest poppies.

*Viviana*

Then

I know who found these.

*Felice*

She's to be my bride.

*Viviana*

Thy bride! Hear, Madam, this boy I'm wont  
to tease

To blushes — how the olive glows — this boy  
Would have a wife!

*Duenna*

Most foolish!

*Viviana*

Nay, secure !

For all their love is hoarded for each other  
 Since first he sighed to the moon, since first she  
     blushed  
 To her glass.

*Felice*

My Innocenza bade me say  
 She prayeth every night that joy will come  
 Unto the Lady Viviana.

*Viviana*

Tell her  
 To burn her candles for another wish.  
 I have no lack of joy. I 'll pray for her.  
 But was she grown ?

*Felice* (*pointing to Innocenza*)

Look again !

*Viviana*

Fetch her hither !

(*Felice runs to fetch Innocenza. They approach their mistress hand in hand, waiting for her to notice them. Viviana has put some of the asters in her hair.*)

*Duenna*

A child would love their gold, but why shouldst  
     thou  
 Cherish the weeds ?

*Viviana*

For that I love the gold

As children do.

*Duenna*

A taste more delicate

Becometh thee.

*Viviana*

Is it unmaidenly

Preferring gold to lead, and life to death?

*Duenna*

I beg thee guard thy tongue, dear Viviana;  
I never spoke such words.

*Viviana*

Last night we paced  
The terrace whilst the nightingale complained  
To the stars. And when I cried, "Ah, me! to thrill  
"With the lark in the fields at dawn!" I heard  
thy sigh.

Despair not, Madam, 't is this fault of mine  
For which Tristan doth love me. "Like my  
jewel,

(fingering her brooch) "Thou must forever  
gleam." Then I replied —

Pray stop thine ears, dear Madam, for my tongue  
I will not — "Ever I shall flash in the sun.

'T is thou

“Who art my sun!”—Oh, I can guess your thought—

My sun’s oftentimes obscured! I am the breeze  
That clears the sullen clouds before my lord,  
The Sun!

*Duenna*

I cannot stop all ears that hear thee.

(*To Felice.*) Poppet! She’s but a child for thee  
to tend

And thou needst mother more than wife. What  
skill

Hath she in housewife duties?

*Felice*

All the ways

To keep my house—to bake, to sew—

*Duenna*

Speak, girl.

*Innocenza (with sudden boldness)*

Madam, my mother taught me how to serve  
My husband, how to keep him warm and fed,  
Obey him, love him—

*Duenna*

Spoken well. Too young  
But promising. Now keep thy kettles bright,  
Thy linen fresh, never forget thy prayers.

(*She gives Innocenza a coin.*)

*Felice*

Our thanks, sweet lady.

*Innocenza*

The Virgin bless thee, Madam.

(*The Duenna crosses to the other side of the garden.*)

*Viviana*

Where didst thou pluck this flower? A violet  
grown

In Perusia's meadows?

*Felice*

In Assisi, my lady.

*Viviana*

Assisi? She can tell me, then — My child,  
Come hither. Felice, away. We two will talk  
Together, we women. 'T is not for thee to hear.

(*Felice returns to his task of clipping the hedges. Viviana seats herself upon a marble bench. Innocenza stands before her.*)

Thou art Assisi born? And dost thou know  
That strange community of friars that call  
Themselves the Brothers Minor?

*Innocenza*

Yes, my lady.

*Viviana*

“ Their Little Portion,” is it rude and bare?  
And would one suffer there in sickness?

*Innocenza*

Rude

And bare their lodging is, but merciful  
 And tender are the Brothers unto all  
 That suffer, be it pain or sin.

*Viviana*

There's one

Lies there in pain whom I would tend. Ah, me !  
 There winds the road ! Were it a thousand miles,  
 He could be no further from me.

*Innocenza*

Do not grieve.

The Little Father with his blessed hands  
 Perchance doth tend him.

*Viviana*

The Little Father?

*Innocenza*

He

We called Francesco Bernadone once.

*Viviana*

Tell me of him.

*Innocenza*

My mother served his mother,  
 Lady Pica. When I was a child he gave  
 Me toys. To me he was a Prince, and all  
 Assisi flattered him. But now, — ah, lady,

He is a saint of God ! Men say he bears  
The wounds of God in his own flesh. Myself  
Have seen a wonder. Once when we had roamed  
In the fields, returning, I by chance espied  
The Little Poor Man, so I lingered last  
To win his smile. And then my heart stood still,  
For after him there crept a horrid wolf.  
Ere I could scream, he turned and said, "Fare-  
well,

"My Brother," and the wolf went on his way.

*Viviana*

A wonder truly, or the wolf was fed  
Till satisfied. Methinks I can recall  
Tales of youth that left a life of ease  
And mirth for poverty. To me 't is dark  
Why men should think God can be praised  
alone

By groans. Dost hear the chaffinch chaunting  
there

In the mimosa ? He is praising God  
With blithesome voice that soundeth sweet to  
Him

As the nightingale's lament. This world 's for  
Joy,

Beauty, Romance : for lovers' amorous sighs  
As well as prayers. What thinkest thou, Inno-  
cenza?

*Innocenza*

Even so, my lady.

*Viviana*

Loose that yellow tress.

Thy hair will match a ribbon I will give thee.

'Tis brighter even than mine. For shame to  
play

The lady !

*Innocenza*

All my parents' kin are brown.

It shameth them that I should have such hair.

But Felice likes it.

*Viviana*

Aye, he doth, I 'll warrant.

*Innocenza*

He wrote a song about my yellow hair.

That 's what he 's singing — made upon the day

He saw me first. I wore this cowslip gown.

*Viviana*

(*Aside*) Not faded yet! — Who could not be a  
poet

With such a gown to rhyme about? We 'll lis-  
ten.

(Felice can be heard singing.)

Whene'er she combs her tresses,

Veil that 's spun of foam and sun

Must fold those little shoulders  
In lingering caresses.

*Innocenza (demurely)*

Now I'll surprise him! (Singing)

The dark-eyed stranger mocks me,  
I plaited smooth my tresses.

*Felice (appearing above the hedge)*

Thou saucy mocking-bird: (Singing)  
She thinks her milk-white kerchief

Hides from me those darling curls.  
But see on her quiet forehead  
One curl that's strayed in mis-  
chief.

*Innocenza (singing)*

My mother will call me foolish  
To wear my finest kerchief.

*Felice (singing)*

There's nothing that can compare.

Flower o' the broom, thou art too dull,  
Bloom o' the wheat, 't is paler,  
Silk o' the corn, 't is rougher  
Than Some One's golden hair! :

*Viviana*

Oh, sweet! There's more? Felice, I would  
rank

Thee greatest of poets save one other.

*Felice*

Pardon,

My lady, Innocenza is the song —  
 I made the words and tune.

*Viviana*

Incomparable

Then I must rank your poesie!

*Innocenza*

Thou dolt,

To thy work !

*Felice*

Pardon again, my lady. Try me  
 'Gainst all the maiden rhymers of the town  
 And I will warrant to outdo them all.

*Viviana*

Then bring them in. I warn thee I am stern  
 In judging rhymes.

(*Felice runs to the house and calls beneath the window.*)

*Felice*

Emilia, Bianca !

(*He runs to the gate and calls.*)

Sofia, Gabriella, Angiola !

(*Two heads appear at the window.*)

Come out and try your skill with me at rhyming.  
 Our mistress doth command it.

*Bianca*

We're obedient.

(They hurry out. Gabriella, Angiola, and Sofia appear at the gate.)

*Sofia*

What's all this chattering about?

*Emilia*

Come, girls,

We'll bring the blushes to Felice's cheeks!

(They whisper together. Felice slings a guitar over his shoulder.)

*Felice*

Who's ready?

*Emilia (stepping forward)*

Sharpen your wits, Sir!

(They begin to dance side by side, Felice playing an accompaniment to her song.)

*Emilia (singing with mock chagrin)*

Felice, lovely lad,

Thy wooing makes Perusian maidens sad!

(Felice, still dancing and playing, selects a palm leaf and casts it at Emilia's feet.)

*Felice (singing)*

Flower o' the palm!

Familiar beauties leave me cold and calm,

But strange delights have strangest power to charm.

*Viviana*

Well begun!

*Gabriella (waving her handkerchief to Beppo, who has appeared in the doorway, and taking Emilia's place beside Felice)*

The calf would plough, the fledgling fly,  
Since young Felice goes a-wooing by!

(*Beppo claps his hands.*)

*Innocenza*

Now, then, Felice, bestir thyself!

(*He selects a stalk of aloe and presents it to Gabriella.*)

*Felice (singing)*

Flower of the aloe!

Alas, how age can turn fair maidens sallow!

Yet youth must learn old age to fear and hallow!

*Beppo (to Gabriella)*

Yield now!

(*Felice throws a wreath of roses around Innocenza's neck.*)

*Felice (singing)*

Flower o' the rose!

In praising thee, hark how my music flows!

You listen and the crimson deeper grows!

*Viviana*

You approach a climax!

(*Bianca takes her turn.*)

*Bianca (singing)*

Felice, worthy is thy pride!  
With kisses we will welcome home thy bride!

*Viviana*

That's the sweetest poesie I have yet heard!

(*Felice selects for her a bouquet of mignonette.*)

*Felice (singing)*

Flower o' the mignonette!  
Bianca's beauty keeps me quivering yet,  
Though Innocenza bids me to forget!

*Viviana*

A trifle overdone, Innocenza?

*Innocenza*

I am no judge of rhymes, sweet lady!

(*Sofia comes forward.*)

*Sofia (singing spitefully)*

Since vain you frayed your shoes before my  
garden-door,

You seek new paths, new beauties to adore.

Soon you'll be barefoot, so one pang the  
more!

(*Felice picks a squash vine and throws it about her neck.*)

*Felice (singing)*

Flower o' the squash!

Some lips speak wisdom, others only bosh!

I choose to kiss the crimson cheeks that wash!

(*All the other girls cry out exultantly.*)

*Viviana*

What skilful jesting! There you were hard pressed, Felice!

*Sofia (going away)*

I've no more time to waste. Trade is good to-day.

*Felice*

One more song, girls!

(*They form a ring about Viviana. Felice, singing, as they all throw before her branches of hawthorn which Felice has broken.*)

Flower o' the thorn!

For my poor rhymes our mistress hides her scorn.

Fair as the starlight, fairer than the morn!

*Innocenza (kneeling)*

Flower o' the golden star,

Mary, send healing out of Heaven afar!

(*Bepo, who had re-entered the house after Gabriella's song, now reappears.*)

*Bepo*

Signior Valente waits within. He seeks

My master.

*Viviana*

Signior Valente here? What news?  
Thou hast not dared to come without a message!

*Beppo*

The Count Sensoli is restored.

*Viviana* (*to Duenna who has been looking on*)

Good Madam,

Thou hearest? — Say the master's gone, I know  
Not where. Conduct Signior Valente hither.  
Children, away with you! (*To Angiola*) I'll  
hear thy song

Another day, and will award the prize.  
And thou shalt have thy ribbon, Innocenza.  
But now away with you.

(*They withdraw, Bianca and Emilia to the house, Angiola, Sofia, and Gabriella to the square, and Felice and Innocenza to the upper terrace, where Felice resumes his work.*)

*Beppo (returning)*

*Signior Valente*

Entreats thy pardon, but he may not stay  
Till he hath found Marchese d'Alessi.

*Viviana*

Sirrah,

Conduct him hither!

*Beppo*

Aye, my lady.

*Viviana*

So

That lean-faced friar spoke truth. But 't was  
twelve days

Ago he came, twelve lagging days without  
A message from him! — Madam, 'tis no marvel  
Messer Valente falters. You remember  
How last he figured before me? Here was my  
hand

Awaiting his farewell. Before the act  
The shouts insisted. Then he wrenched his  
sword —

“God and Saint Laurence for Perusia!”  
And he was gone!

*Duenna*

Would you have stayed him?

*Valente (entering)*

Ladies,

Your servant greets you.

*Duenna (giving her hand)*

Welcome, Signior.

*Viviana*

Hail,

O conqueror!

*Valente (sombrely)*

God guard thee, dearest lady.

*Viviana*

And thee, Sir Long Face. What I thought to  
hear

Was "Hail, Conqueror of all hearts." Such  
speech

Was wont to become you better. Drooping  
plume

And trailing colors? Thou dost wear the front  
Of the vanquished! Thou, the Champion of  
the Corn!

Have we not greeted you with laurelled pomp  
But yesterday? To-day you sulk. Nay, this  
Is grief! Tristan! You have deceived me!

*Valente*

Nay,

He is restored. I swear it by the mass!

*Viviana*

When have you seen him? Tell me, is he  
wasted?

*Valente*

He was asleep —

*Viviana*

Then, why could you not stay  
Till he should wake?

*Valente*

I can return anon —

Before the summons comes again to war.  
For marketing hath grown a dangerous trade.  
My brother's letter I read in my saddle. I  
spurred

My horse and never stayed until I reached  
The House of Portiuncula. Be assured  
It is well with him!

*Duenna*

Fie on those foolish cheeks !

*Viviana*

I'll see the letter.

*Valente*

Nay, I have it not. —

*Viviana*

Thou stupid ! What message hath he sent ?

*Valente*

He sent —

His blessing.

*Viviana*

Oh, you never were in love !

Is this the hero all Perusia's maids  
Adore ? Pray, do you wear such doleful looks  
Before my Lady Laura or Lady Tessa  
Or Maddalena on her balcony ?

*Valente*

They

Heed not my frowns nor I their mirth : but  
only  
My Lady Viviana.

*Viviana*

Now at last

I know thee for Valente. How was it  
I could deny the soldier for the scholar?

*Valente (mirthlessly)*

'T is plain —

*Viviana*

Ah, true ! But come, sit here with me  
And talk of him. — Canst bear to listen,  
Madam ?

(Enter Marchese, left.)

*Marchese*

You here ? O God in Heaven, curse thou the  
name  
Sensoli here and in Hell forever — Why  
Am I come too late ? I should have been the  
first  
To tell thee. Could my body shield the blow,  
My life for thine !

*Viviana*

Tristan ?

*Marchese*

Behold your work,  
Assassin, accomplice! Her cheeks will be no  
whiter  
In her coffin!

*Valente*

Tristan is alive! 'T is thou  
Hast killed her! I could tell her nothing.

*Duenna*

Child,

He is alive! Dost hear, my darling?

*Marchese*

Dearest,  
All that I have is thine. Thou shalt be mis-  
tress  
Here always. But there are braver men and  
truer  
Who love thee. Spurn his memory!

*Viviana*

The truth!

Will no one tell me?

*Valente*

I must tell thee. God  
Instruct me how to speak! — My brother  
Tristan,  
Having renounced all riches and rank and one

Dearer than life, to save our souls with his,  
Hath taken the unalterable vows of a Brother  
Minor !

*Duenna*

Oh, Mary, spare this child! Smite me for her!

*Valente*

Assassin! The word was true!

*Marchese*

To save his soul?

Nay, to be damned to everlasting hate!  
The market-place is ringing with the scandal!  
Valente, we were friends before. And now —

*Valente*

'T is ended now? Be it so. There will be time  
To talk of that henceforth. She needs us now.

*Marchese*

My brave girl!

*Duenna*

I'd rather see her tears.

*Viviana*

The letter!

*Valente*

Here. Shall I read it thee?

Hear how he loves thee; written in agony.

(Reading) "You to whom I write now bear  
alone the name Sensoli. For Count Sensoli is

minded to put on the habit of the Lesser Brothers and hath elected to be known as Brother Humble."

*Duenna*

But stop! It is yet too late?

*Valente*

'T is three days past—

"Our age is vapid, somnolent, besotted. I weary of the world and I had wandered in a wilderness till now a path appears leading to peace!"

*Marchese*

A path for children and the blind, perchance,  
But not for men. 'T was ever thou, Valente,  
I loved best, honored most. What other word  
Befits the man that will not beat his path  
Even through the wilderness — I who admired  
him

And would advance him — I must ask what other  
Befits him as doth "Coward"!

*Viviana*

I forbid you!

*Valente*

'T is past endurance! Sir, my brother's honor—

*Duenna*

Oh, Sirs, forbear!

*Viviana*

The letter!

*Valente*

Pray, forgive.—

“I charge thee sell our father’s lands, to which I am the heir, and give the money among the poor.”

*Marchese*

He robs his only kin!

*Valente*

He is the heir.—

“Communicate my purpose to Marchese d’Alessi; and say to her I was about to wed, that God has saved me from the wrong I would, in ignorance, have wrought her—”

*Viviana*

No wrong save this!

*Valente*

“I bid her cleanse her heart of sinful, vain desires for earthly marriage; which to perform she shall betake herself unto the convent of Saint Damian’s—”

*Viviana*

Oh, dreadful!

*Duenna*

Is’t a face

To hide beneath the veil?

*Valente*

Wilt hear the end? —

“Where she shall find the perfect joy. This I command her, by our love; and by thine honor and our bond of blood, I charge thee make no hindrance. I pray for thee, that God will turn thee from thy delight in worldly things. Oh, brother, would that thou might taste the joy I have found within this House.”

*Marchese*

The end?

*Valente*

Forbear!

*Luigi (snatching the letter from him)*

“Make no effort to dissuade me, for I deem it best that thou be denied entrance. These gray walls, this bed of rushes, are transformed into a chamber for the fairest of brides, my Lady Poverty.”

He’s welcome to his bride, the fool!

*Duenna*

Oh, Sirs!

Pray take your quarrel elsewhere. Leave us now.

I need to tend her as she were my child  
Again.

*Viviana*

Yes, leave me.

*Marchese*

Sister, dost thou think  
I'd leave thee now?

*Duenna*

Oppose her not, my lord,  
I beg. My darling, do not grieve too much.  
It may be thou art spared the agony  
A wife can know. Oh, I had feared for thee,  
Thou Child of Joy ! It is as if he died  
In youth, sinless, and leaving thee for Hea-  
ven.

Wilt send me from thee?

*Viviana*

Go, all but Valente.  
And, Madam, I do not think to grieve thee  
more

With that unseemly gaiety he loved —

*Duenna*

Thou tortur'est me !

(*Marchese and Duenna retire.*)

*Viviana*

That word, it was not true?

*Valente*

A cursed lie !

*Viviana*

So help me to believe!

(*The clock of a neighboring church strikes six.*)

The hour is Sext. The Brothers are at prayer.

*Valente*

Your face shall come across his prayer.

*Viviana*

Perchance.

A little while the poppies shall look red  
As lips; the wind crisping the grass shall sound  
Like silken skirts, and then — he will forget.  
Deny me not, I know. I've watched that face  
Grow pensive even whilst he vowed, "I love  
thee!"

My sigh, a touch, and the wavering flame leaped  
forth

All glorious. And I have been content.  
Yonder he's praying God to cleanse my heart  
"Of sinful, vain desires." An hour ago  
Here in this garden a young peasant maid  
Sang me her lover's song, sweet as the call  
Of birds. But she was sinful! Hark to the  
blackcap

Calling his mate! How high and wild and  
sweet!

O sinful world of God!

*Valente*

God's wounds ! Ah, Tristan,  
Was it worth the piteous cost to save your soul ?  
If so one climbs to Heaven, I 'll writhe in Hell.

*Viviana*

" As if he died in youth, sinless !" Why, then,  
Are broken vows no sin ? Forgive me, dearest,  
I know your heart is rent, praying for me,  
And I must pray for you, or else in Heaven  
Your virtue be counted evil. " I command her  
" By our dear love — " So, then, I must obey.

*Valente*

What will you do ?

*Viviana*

Why, I will go my way  
Unto the Convent of Saint Damian's —

*Valente*

By Heaven —

*Viviana*

Farewell, my Joy in Quietude.  
My roses, yield your sweets : I 'll treasure them  
In my heart forever. The place is dark and cold  
Whither I 'm going, dark and cold. But there  
I shall be nearer him. And all the world 's  
Grown dark and cold. 'T is thou who art my  
sun !

*Valente*

Look at me, lady. Nay? I say you shall.

*Viviana*

I did not know your eyes were so like his!

*Valente*

Curse him! Look close. Does the flame waver?

*Viviana*

Forbear!

*Valente*

Nay, you shall hear me now. I'll give to thee  
Roses, free air, thy thoughts shall soar like birds,  
And homing find a nest in my heart. The  
cloister

Would be your prison cell, a tomb!

*Viviana*

Free air

And roving thoughts?

*Valente*

And gems and silken robes!

*Viviana*

Oh, shame! You think me a wilful girl that  
weeps

For stolen trinkets?

*Valente*

Sweet, mistake me not.

I could not let that rough, ugly robe

Touch you. I know you tender women : you  
Would wear your martyrdom like a crown till  
the thorns

Sting you to death. Oh, let me be thy ser-  
vant.

My love is humble. God ! I did not come  
To speak such words ! When first I read his  
letter

I marvelled how a man could be so noble.  
And then I thought of thee ! My brain whirled,  
And now but this is clear,— I curse his name  
Who wrought thee woe ! — I love thee !

*Viviana*

I forbid !

*Valente*

I rode to the House of Portiuncula.  
They told me he was sleeping ; and at prayer  
When I knocked again. I would have burst the  
door

Had not one Brother spoke so graciously.  
I rode away ashamed. His holy look  
Softened me till I saw thy stricken face.

*Viviana*

I charge you, help me to perform his will.

*Valente*

Are you a marble saint or breathing flesh,

My beauty? How long before you loathe your  
prison?

He never loved you!

*Viviana*

Once before you clamped  
My hand like this; but at the shout of soldiers  
Forgot your courtesy, my Captain!

*Valente*

Then

You choose a coward?

*Viviana*

Hush, you make me scorn  
Myself and you. I should be proud, proud,  
'T was leaving me for Heaven.

*Francesco (appearing at the gate)*

The Lord give you

His peace!

*Viviana*

Ah, peace! You speak that word who  
wrought

Me agony? Tell him I will obey,  
I'll pray I may forgive him — say his jewel  
Hath burned to ashes!

*Innocenza (to Felice as she runs to open the gate)*

Look, the Little Poor Man!

Here's my Felice. He's an honest lover

Who gives me golden earrings. Bless us now,  
Dear Father !

*(She kneels before him, dragging Felice down  
beside her.)*

*Viviana*

Bid them cleanse their sinful hearts  
Of love !

*Valente*

Oh, hush ! You mock a holy man !

*Francesco*

Thou here, my little Sister ? Be good children,  
And love your Lord !

*(He blesses them and dismisses them, ad-  
vancing down the terrace steps.)*

I come to bring good tidings

Of great joy, even I, Poor Little One

Of Lord Jesu Christ. I come to bid

Thee welcome to our life of poverty.

O perfect joy ! O bliss ineffable !

Above all graces and all gifts that He

Vouchsafes to His belovèd, is the pearl

Most precious, sacred, and most lovable,

'T is holy poverty ! 'T is this that hung

With Christ upon the Cross, with Christ was  
buried,

With Christ it rose again, with Christ ascended

To Heaven. Therefore let us pray to Him  
 To make us worthy to become true lovers  
 Of sacred Poverty!

*Viviana (awed)*

Does his face shine  
 Like yours?

*Francesco*

He yearns that thou too mayest know  
 The perfect joy!

*Viviana*

My joy was perfect. Then  
 His face would shine like yours?

*Valente*

Now I have lost you!

(*He kneels before her, bowing his head upon  
 the hilt of his sword.*)

And I have stained my name with slandering  
 My brother. Only my sword is honest. Bless  
 The wielding of it! When thou art shriven and  
 veiled,

Bespeak me oft to God, for I am sinful!

*Viviana (wavering)*

I might have girded it upon thy side!

(*To Francesco*) Take me away from him!

(*Francesco throws his arm protectingly about  
 Viviana.*)

*Valente (sadly, quietly)*

I cannot harm thee!

(Francesco places his hand upon the hilt of  
Valente's sword, blessing it.)

*Francesco*

Lord Jesu Christ, bless thy child,  
Make his heart pure and mild ;  
Grant him grace coming and staying,  
Waking and sleeping, living and dying.

Amen.

CURTAIN

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## ACT III

### SCENE I.

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SCENE: *A cross-roads in the fields near Assisi. The roads cross the stage diametrically, the one leading to the rear winds through a little copse on rising ground. In the foreground, right, a great rock, from beneath which bubbles a spring. Enter, right, BROTHER HUMBLE. Shading his eyes with his hand, he gazes long up the winding road. At length he seats himself on the rock.*

*Humble*

'TIS proved how Brother Ass can ease the burden

For Brother Soul. The more I am a-wearied,  
The more content. Bare feet and rough attire  
Prove potent medicine for world-weariness.

Here cometh one, whose garb, although 't is motley,

Denotes our kinship.

(Enter, right, Giacomo, in a tattered livery.

Humble opens his wallet and takes out food.)

Brother, wilt thou dine

With me?

Giacomo (*eagerly*)

For two good reasons, Father: first,  
I am famished! second, you owe me something,  
you

Of the brown-clad friars. For once I had a  
home

And master, but my master chose to change  
His velvet for your garb. So I was driven  
Into the world with only a piece of gold!  
Next day the gold was gambled at the fair!  
My wife grows thin and ugly and the babies  
Are always crying — Once I had a roof —

(He looks closely into Humble's face, then  
throws the bread into the ditch.)

Master, the bread I fed your hounds was sweeter!

(He goes out.)

Humble (*calmly*)

This robe is mail against ingratitude's  
Fierce shafts that can no longer reach my heart.

(In the distance some one is singing. In the  
pauses of the song, the nightingale sings  
as if in answer.)

*The Voice*

O Love, Love, who thus hast wounded me,  
 I can proclaim no other name than Love.  
 O Love, Love, let me be joined to thee,  
 I shall embrace none other dear as Love!

*Humble*

He cometh, heavenly poet 'mid our age  
 Of vicious prose. I think the very leaves  
 Lean lovingly to him, the flowers yearn  
 To be plucked. Hark, now, the nightingale  
 would sing

As sweet! He counts the universe his kin.

*Francesco (singing)*

O Love, Love, thou so entrancest me,  
 My heart is always quivering with love.  
 I am quivering for thee,  
 Love, but to be with thee!

O Love, for courtesy,  
 Make me to die of love!

(*Humble bastens to greet Francesco as he appears in the leafy path, centre.*)

*Francesco*

Why wert thou silent, Brother? I had harked  
 Along the way for thy response.

*Humble*

I have

No skill in singing.

*Francesco*

Little Sister Bird

Sang antiphon to me. A thankful heart  
Makes sweetest melody. Our tongues should  
have

No use but to exalt the Lord. My rule  
Enjoins that ye go singing on your way.  
I name my children Carollers of God.

*Humble*

Once I delighted me with deathless words  
Of singers long since dust. But now I walk  
Familiar with a poet that transmutes  
Our homely tongue to music.

*Francesco*

I command,  
Call it not poesie, my praise of God!  
It sings untutored on my lips. O Thou  
Most sweet, my God! My spouse! Delight of  
my soul!

*Humble*

Thou art fain to sing the world to righteousness.

*Francesco*

My voice is weak, but I must lift it up  
So long as I have breath. What of thy quest?  
This first endeavor I have laid on thee?

*Humble*

This food, a prayer or two for benediction,

Gibes from a knave that knew me 'neath my  
cowl,  
And peace within.

*Francesco*

Take heed to preach the Word  
Acceptably, nor whatever dwells within,  
Be it peace or storm.

*Humble*

It was tranquillity  
I sought in putting on this garb.

*Francesco*

Nay, then,  
Thou erred. Thou canst not buy the peace of  
God  
With cord and cassock. Furthermore, His  
peace  
Is something sweet and fiery that thrills  
The heart a-quivering.

(*He lays the food on the rock.*)

We are unworthy

Of such great treasure.

*Humble*

Pray, how canst thou speak  
Of treasure where there is such poverty?  
I've chosen poverty, I'll bear the sting  
Of toil and hunger willingly—

*Francesco*

My son,  
I do not shun the sting, I count it bliss.

*Humble*

For there shall be reward? What if we lack  
For cloth and knife and porringer and board  
And home and servants? It shall be accounted  
For virtue verily.

*Francesco*

I had no thought  
Of gaining a reward. I was reminded  
Of God's sweet courtesy. He that vouchsafes  
To send His rain alike upon the just  
And the unjust, hath fashioned this broad stone  
To be our table, and hath given a spring  
Of crystal water that the thirsty pilgrim  
May be refreshed. Therefore I count it treasure,  
For our inn was not prepared by human hands.

*Humble*

Oh, keep me with thee always; I would drink  
Of the fount that leaps within thy heart.

*Francesco*

No more  
Of thee or me, but eat and pray, then onward.  
(Praying) Sweet Jesu, thou hast fed us like the  
ravens.

In Thee is all our trust. Amen.

(*They eat sparingly.*) Behold

The covetous ants are seeking for their portion.  
But they shall be denied ; they have forgot  
The words of Jesu Christ, since they take  
thought

For the morrow. Therefore let us feed the  
birds,

Who best obey Him.

(*He scatters some crumbs on the ground. One  
bird darts down and seizes a crumb, then  
another and another until a flock is hovering  
over the rock.*)

Francesco (*advancing, finger on lip*)

Behold, the Little Religious,  
The hooded lark !

(*He fills his hands with crumbs. The birds  
alight on him and peck the crumbs. He  
begins to preach to them softly.*)

My sisters of the air,

Much bounden are ye unto God your Maker,  
For He hath given you the power to fly  
Where'er ye will.— See how they ruffle their  
wings !

They understand my words.— He hath pre-  
served

Your seed in the ancient ark of Noah, lest  
Your happy race be lost. The boundless air  
He appointeth for your home. And more than  
this,

Ye sow not, neither do ye reap, for God  
Will feed you ; streams and fountains hath He  
given

To be your drink. The mountains and the  
vales

Are for your refuge with their mighty trees  
Whereon to make your nests. And since ye  
lack

The skill to spin and sew, God clotheth you  
In shining feathers, double and triple raiment.  
Therefore, my little sisters, since your God  
Hath shown such love for you, avoid the sin  
Of ingratitude and study ever more  
To sing praises unto God.

*(He makes over them the sign of the Cross.  
They soar aloft, singing joyously.)*

Behold, they fly  
To the four parts of the heavens. Even so  
My Brethren shall preach the Cross of Christ  
Throughout the world ; even so my sons,  
Possessing nothing of their own, commit  
Their lives unto the providence of God.

*Humble*

I would  
Our Little Brother could have heard thy ser-  
mon !

*Francesco*

My little child ! The first to trust in me,  
Leaving his toys for prayer. He will believe  
When all else falter.

*Humble*

None can ever leave thee,  
Our Little Father !

*Francesco*

Some there are who name  
Me father, yet they are no kin of mine !  
For whoso doeth the will of my Father which  
is  
In Heaven, the same is my brother and sister  
and mother.

*Humble*

Teach me thy will that I may be thy kins-  
man.

Behold what comes — a charger riderless,  
With sable trapping for a warrior's death.  
How many other saddles too were empty  
Before that rider fell ! A score of days,  
And he will be forgot, unless perchance

His charger neigh for him. Epitome  
Of the world of strife !

(Enter, left, a soldier of low rank, leading a charger.)

Humble begs alms of him.)

Francesco

God save his soul !

Soldier (giving a coin to Humble)

Aye, Father,

We all need prayers. But I must think that  
God

When He looked down and saw him scale the  
wall

Hath thought, "This man will make a valiant  
angel

"To storm the gates of Hell." So now he  
serves

Under the Lord of Hosts!

(He uncovers his head.)

Francesco

A prayer to speed him,  
Whilst thou, dear Brother Humble, spread our  
store

And welcome our guest to our inn.

(Francesco begins to pray. Humble offers  
the soldier food. Suddenly Humble notices  
the trappings of the horse.)

*Humble*

Sensoli arms

Embroidered here? The loss is mine alone!

(He flings his arms across the saddle, bowing his head upon the charger's neck.)

*Pietro, the soldier*

You loved my Captain? Ah, I know you now!

Could I ever mistake your face for his? Mark you,

Each man hath changed his costume since that day

I climbed to your balcony. The beggar's earned  
A soldier's mail; the pall lies over one;  
And you, wearing the garb of charity,  
Would give the bread denied when I entreated  
In Perusia's name.

(The charger whinnies mournfully.)

Come, my bonny girl.

Thou goest to feed in quiet pastures where  
This archèd leg shall stiffen and thy mane  
Bristle with burrs. And when upon thy face  
The black hairs whiten and the film of blue  
Shall cloud thy sight, even then at times thy  
nostrils

Shall foam when thou art dreaming of the battle

And thy bold master's rein. It should have been  
 For both one last wild plunge from reddest life  
 To death!

*(He goes out, right, leading the charger.)*  
*Francesco*

Praised be my Lord for Sister Death!  
 To righteous souls she bringeth only blessing.  
 These green fields, do they speak to thee of hope,  
 The hue of Paradise? The chant of birds,  
 How harsh compared with the unending praise  
 Of angels!

*Humble*

Nay, the universe is foreign,  
 And I am homeless, without kin. Your beasts  
 Are not my brothers, your sisters of the air,  
 I heed them not!

*Francesco*

Hast thou not chosen me  
 To be thy kin? Wilt thou deny me, Brother?

*Humble*

Have you no other name to call me?

*Francesco*

Friend,  
 Our guest did scorn our entertainment. Where-  
 fore

Hath he reproached thee?

*Humble*

Must I heed every beggar  
Whose claim must be most just?

*Francesco*

They said to Jesus,  
“When saw we thee a-hungered and we fed  
Thee not?”

*Humble*

I do entreat you, Father, tell me  
Again how looked Valente’s eyes when you  
Denied him entrance?

*Francesco*

At the last he wept  
And begged thy prayers and blessed thee.

*Humble*

Aye, ’t is like.  
My way to him was always wisest, noblest.  
When we were boys he used to beg me read  
The tales of martial deeds: Leonidas,  
Horatius, some foolhardy knight. And both  
He marvelled at alike, the storied hero  
And his dear scholar. How I loved to watch  
His crimson deepen! Now his face gleams white  
In death!

*Francesco*

God chose him for His warrior!

*Humble (bitterly)*

So on men's lips his name shall be heroic;  
And I am Brother Humble.

*Francesco*

There are deeds  
As valiant God shall lay on thee; our task  
Is now to learn His bidding. I command  
That thou by holy obedience turn round  
And round in the road and never cease to  
turn

Until I speak.

*Humble (puzzled)*

What is your will?

*Francesco*

Obey!

*Humble (sullenly)*

Aye, prove me as thou wilt!

(*Francesco kneels in the road and begins to pray. Humble turns round so many times that he becomes dizzy and falls; but rises and continues his task.*)

*Francesco (with closed eyes)*

Brother, stand still.

Which way art thou facing now?

*Humble (shortly)*

It is the north.

*Francesco*

That is the way that God would have thee go.  
*(Opening his eyes.)* And I face southwards. By  
 our dear Lord's grace,

It is the road that leadeth to Saint Damian's.  
 Beneath that olive shade mine eyes, grown dim  
 From weeping o'er my sins, shall be restored ;  
 There shall my spirit quicken through the serv-  
 ice

Of holy Clare. Come hither to me when thou  
 Shalt have performed thy mission.

*Humble*

What's your will ?

*Francesco*

Yon lies Perusia. Preach in the market-place  
 The sweetness of repentance and the love  
 Of God.

*Humble*

Thou knowest not my people ; they  
 Are vapid, volatile, ignoble ; deaf  
 To heavenly poesie !

*Francesco*

Hast thou never loved  
 Thy neighbor, then how shalt thou love thy  
 God ?  
 My son refuses ?

*Humble*

Let me counsel thee.

*Francesco*

Is not the Lord our Counsellor, who shewed  
 The way? I speak with His authority,  
 Who am the vilest of all sinners; thus  
 Mankind may know all virtue and all power  
 Proceed from God and not from any creature.  
 O Brother Humble, Brother Humble, yield  
 To God!

(*Humble turns without speaking, taking  
 the road up the hill, rear.*)

And on thy way lift up thy voice  
 In antiphon of praise, that I may know  
 My son remembereth his Father's will.  
 (*Singing.*) Now He hath conquered me  
 All enmity shall cease;

And love in verity

Attend upon our peace.

*Humble (hidden by the trees; with faltering voice)*  
 'T is Christ enamours me,  
 I am mighty through His grace!  
 My heart shall faithful be  
 To Christ who comforts me.

My heart's aflame with love!

(*When the voice has ceased, Francesco  
 sinks down upon the rock; spent, lonely.*)

*Francesco*

Francesco, thou art homeless, without kin !  
 My kindred of the earth and air, I pray,  
 Be very kind to me ! Good Messer Sun,  
 Veil me thy rays a little, lest thy glory  
 Shall blind me !                                   *(Bathing his eyes.)*

Pure and gentle Sister Water,  
 Thy touch is like my mother's hand ; and I  
 Am homeless, without kin ! But once I found  
 A consolation in the chill embrace of snow.

*(He breaks flowering branches from a tree  
 and makes of them three mounds ; one long  
 and a little one on either side. He kneels  
 beside them.)*

I am not alone. Here lies my wife,  
 And here my little children.

*(He caresses them, kissing the blossoms.)*

What's to do,  
 My darlings ? I who lack for time to serve  
 The Lord, how shall I care for you ? Call  
 me

No more, no more, my own most dear ! The  
 Lord

Hath need of me ! Call me no more, no more !

*(He rises from his knees and goes out, right,  
 singing joyously.)*

My heart shall faithful be  
To Christ who comforts me!  
My heart's aflame with love!  
My heart's aflame with love!

CURTAIN

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## ACT III

### SCENE 2.

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SCENE: *The garden at Saint Damian's. Dawn. In the rear and across the sides, the cloister. In the foreground, right, a little hut of willow boughs. At rear, left, a wide gate opening upon the road. The Poor Ladies may be heard chanting the "Praise of the Creatures."* FRANCESCO appears at the door of the hut, groping his way. He listens ecstatically to his hymn.

*The Poor Ladies (singing)*

MOST high, all-powerful, benignant Lord,  
To Thee all praise and honor we accord !  
Thine be all blessing, Thine all laud and fame.  
No man is worthy to pronounce Thy name !

Praised be my Lord for all that Thou hast  
done:

For all Thy creatures, specially Messer Sun,  
Our Brother, who bestows the light of day.

How beautiful and splendid is his ray,  
Whereby Thy majesty he must display !

Praised be my Lord for Sisters Moon and Star,  
So clear and lovely set in Heaven afar!

Praised be my Lord for Brother Wind ; for air  
And clouds ; as well for stormy weather as fair ;  
Since all Thy creatures rest beneath Thy care.

Praised be my Lord for Sister Water ; lowly  
Yet precious, useful, and exceedingly holy.

Praised be my Lord for Brother Fire, our light  
That can illume the darkness of the night ;  
Robust and jocund is he, strong and bright.

Praised be my Lord likewise for Mother Earth,  
Who hath been nurse and guardian from our  
birth ;  
Of grass and flower and fruit she knows no  
dearth.

Praised be my Lord for all who grant forgive-  
ness  
For love of Thee ; or bear distress and weakness

In peace. O blessed folk, in verity,  
For Thou shalt crown them for eternity.

Praised be my Lord for Sister Death-of-the-  
Body,

From whom no living man escapeth, truly.

Ah, woe to them that mock Thy holy will !

But blessed are they that all Thy laws fulfil ;  
To them the second death can work no ill.

Praise ye and bless the Lord, and thankfully  
Serve Him forever with humility.

Amen.

(Clare enters from the cloister, rear. She  
bastens to Francesco, supporting him to a  
bench.)

*Francesco*

Ah, Clare, 't is thou ?

*Clare*

Who else, my blessed Father ?  
None else shall tend thee in these hours of pain.  
Hast thou enjoyed the little house I made ?  
Thy look declares thou art refreshed by sleep.  
What of the night ?

*Francesco*

I could not sleep for pain.

*Clare*

Alas !

*Francesco*

And yet my soul hath been refreshed  
 By greater gift than sleep.

*Clare*

What means thy look ?

Thou art transfigured !

*Francesco*

I have heard God's voice !

*Clare*

O holy saint !

*Francesco* (*turning from her and speaking coldly*)

What is the hour ?

*Clare*

'T is Prime.

Thou needst refreshment now.

*Francesco* (*absently*)

I need no food.

I am satisfied.

*Clare*

This suffering wasteth thee,  
 And I must tend thee. Could I bear the pain  
 Thou shouldst not suffer it.

*Francesco*

My tender Clare !

I should have failed and fallen from our faith  
Without thee. Take my blessing now, lest never  
I rest again beneath this shade —

*Clare*

No more !

This cannot be the end !

*Francesco*

Sister, I know

That we shall meet in Paradise.

*Clare (humbly but ecstatically)*

Amen !

*Francesco (whispering with a look of awe)*

It was revealed to me. Ah, Clare, Clare,  
Thou kneel to me ? Once more my little maid  
Fleeing to me at night ? The jewelled hair  
Shorn at the altar, all those shimmering robes  
Put off for these sad garments ! Do they lie  
About thee softly ?

*Clare*

Tenderer than velvet.

(*The bell at the gate rings. Through the bars  
may be seen two brown-clad figures.*)

A message from the Portiuncula.

*Francesco*

God send good tidings from a little son  
Concerning whom my heart is heavy laden ;

I fear me lest the Devil, like a wolf,  
Shall seize my lamb!

*Clare*

But thou, the watchful shepherd,  
Can save thy flock.

(*She admits Brothers Juniper and Humble.*

*Juniper bows low before her without looking into her face. Humble looks at her curiously. Clare receives their salutations bumbly, with averted look.)*

*Juniper*

The Lord give thee His peace,  
Most holy Sister Clare.

*Clare*

God save you both,  
But name me not as holy who am but  
A poor vile woman.

*Humble (aside)*

The garb of poverty  
Mars not the loveliness of high-born beauty.  
This austere loveliness makes ruddier cheeks  
Look blowzy.

*Juniper*

Brother Humble greeteth thee,  
Who recently hath come to dwell with us,  
Leaving a high estate for lowliness.

*Humble*

The very winds are gentle here ; the flowers  
 Bloom frailest, loveliest ; the only birds  
 Soft murmuring doves. Within is quietude,  
 Save for the chant of prayer and praise of hymn.  
 Here faces wear the pallid loveliness  
 Of Heaven.

*Clare (coldly)*

Since here are human hearts, here too  
 Are sin and suffering. This is a house  
 Of penitence and labor.

*(She points to a Sister who goes and comes in  
 the far corner of the garden, laboriously  
 filling jars of water at the well.)*

God befriend her !

Her mind 's well-nigh distraught. A hidden sin,  
 I fear, blacker than penances reveal.  
 Yet she confesses fault enough, desires  
 Of the flesh, pride, wilful disobedience.

*Humble*

I 've marked the Religious at his penances,  
 As ardent as a lover. What is here  
 But frailty and languor and a mind  
 Distraught ?

*Clare*

I must increase the penances,  
 Lest she should die unshrive[n].

*Juniper*

Sister Clare,

We are all sinners, I, the worst of men.  
 The Devil spreads his toils for Brother Humble;  
 Wherefore against his will I came with him.

*Clare (looking full at Humble)*

He is expected.

*Juniper*

We have been delayed.

For on our way we met some stranger folk  
 Who, when they saw our garb, saluted us  
 Most reverently and would have kneeled to us.  
 But the Poor Brethren rather would be scorned  
 And mocked even as their Master was. So I,  
 To make them scorn me, mounted on a log  
 With children playing see-saw; till at length  
 They turned and left us, saying, "He's a fool!"  
 Whereby I was more pleased than by their

awe

And reverence.

*Clare*

Oh, Brother Juniper,  
 Thou plaything of Jesus Christ!

*Humble*

To play the fool!

Then it is holy

*Juniper*

Revile me all thou wilt,

But guard thy tongue from speaking blasphemy !  
 Sweet Brother Humble, I would succor thee ;  
 I can advise thee how to keep thy tongue  
 From speaking evil. I myself have kept  
 For six months silence in this manner : first,  
 For love of God in Heaven ; the second day,  
 For love of Jesu Christ, His Son ; the third,  
 For love of the Holy Spirit ; on the fourth,  
 For reverence to the Holy Virgin Mary ;  
 And thus each day, for love of some sweet saint,  
 I kept the six months' silence. Likewise thou —

*Humble*

For all the saints in Heaven, be silent now !

*Clare*

Thy Father yearneth for thy coming. Go  
 Confess thyself to him. And he is blind  
 And suffering. Canst thou bring comfort ?

*Humble*

*Blind,*

Those luminous eyes ? (*Aside.*) But they shall  
 read my soul !

(Clare beckons Juniper into the chapel. As  
 they pass the Sister at the well, Juniper  
 addresses her gently.)

*Juniper*

The Lord give thee His peace, dear Sister.

*Dolorosa (startled, tremulous, then reassured by his face)*

Peace !

Here is no lack of peace ! Rather a surfeit !

Could you not die of peace ? Listen ! No sound  
But placid, passionless content of doves.

No vivid hue, only the fragile beauty  
Of flowers that languish in the cloister shade.

*Humble (transfixed by her voice)*

Blighted and torn ! As if it could be nature  
The poppy should take on the lily's hue.

*Dolorosa*

The silence deafens, or a mockery  
Of voices call to me ! I pray and beat  
Mine ears, yet ever the luring voices shrill  
Above the sacred peace. The strum of lutes,  
The flutter of fans, and spurs ringing ! The  
                laugh

Of children here in a house of barren women !  
Yet Sister Clare 's content, and you look happy.  
Something exalts your face — something, some-  
thing —

*Juniper (pityingly)*

'T is only a poor cobbler, my lady.

*Clare*

He

Remembereth our Lord's command, "Whoso  
"Will come after me, let him deny himself."

*Dolorosa*

Then I should be most happy. Have I not  
Denied myself? Put off a wedding robe  
For this sad garb? Aye, sadder than the hue  
That honors death! I might be crowned with  
grief,

Touched by the glory of the heroic dead.  
This is the hue of life that ne'er was quick,  
Of death-in-life!

*Humble (aside)*

Wouldst make me hate the dead?

*Dolorosa*

But when I lived carelessly, I was good,  
For then I loved to pray. But now my prayers  
Find no acceptance in God's sight.

*Clare*

Pray on.

When thou art worthy, thou shalt find an answer.

(Meanwhile Humble has filled the jar and  
is about to bear it to the cloister; but  
Clare forbids by a gesture. She enters,  
followed by Juniper.)

*Dolorosa (dully)*

Obedience is best.

(*She goes to the gate and opens it.*)

I know the secret

Of the lock. The gate is open wide. Where  
should

I go? That garden where the flowers bloom  
The gayest — there a haunting memory  
Brings faintness like the wind o'er lily fields.  
Where should I hide me with my shaven head  
And ragged gown? It is my appointed labor.

(*She takes the jar from Humble and lifts  
it, staggering, to her shoulder. She enters  
the cloister.*)

I thank you, Sir. Obedience is best.

*Humble*

O beautiful white vision, like a star,  
Flooding the wide earth for a gleaming moment,  
Whereby I saw the world, and it is good!  
That lost, quick-pulsing world, wherein I moved  
A shadow 'mid the quick!

(*Francesco has risen from his bench and  
gropes his way to Humble.*)

*Francesco*

Who is it near me?

My little sheep of God?

*Humble (without turning)*

I have obeyed thee.

*Francesco*

What of the harvest?

*Humble*

Barren.

*Francesco*

Then thou art

A thriftless husbandman.

*Humble*

The soil is worthless.

*Francesco*

Only untilled. The seed of God's dear word

Will sprout in barren places if the sower

Be diligent. What said thou unto them,

And they to thee?

*Humble*

Ah, there was scorn and insult

To satisfy the lowliest of the Brothers.

Even the zany cobbler would be content.

" My Lord in rags ? " bawled out a dirty fellow ;

" Now he 'll rub elbows with us common folk ! "

And jostled me down into the gutter.

" Is she still fair, your Lady Poverty ? "

Who spoke those words was to have called me  
brother.



Then one opposed, "The garb he wears is holy!"  
Another, "Shame! Would lovers of Perusia  
"Mock at the kinsman of her martyred hero?"  
I know not who spoke thus, but all the throng  
Took up the words, unbonneted, and thus  
They let me pass from out the market-place,  
Where trophies and funereal trappings hung,  
And eyes filmed swiftly at my brother's name.  
O Heaven, the bitterness!

*Francesco*

So, Brother Fainheart,  
Hear my commandment. Go thou once again  
Unto thy people. Say to them, "Give ear  
"To my confession and forgive, for I  
"Shall only be absolved by you. My life  
"Was like an empty cup to fevered lips,  
"A stone to the starving. Therefore God denies  
"The sanctuary I seek." My little son,  
What other words are true?

(Humble makes no reply. His face is sullen.)

Then shalt thou say,  
"Now am I come to ask some service mean  
"Enough to prove my penitence —"

(Francesco hesitates, pondering. Suddenly  
they hear without the tinkle of a bell, as  
if moving.)

A sign

From Heaven ! Dost hear the leper's warning  
bell

That speaks for him, " Beware, I am unclean !" " Hearest thou not the cry his heart would utter, " Outcast, alone !" God hath appointed thee To be their guardian.

*Humble (aghast)*

The leprosy!

*Francesco*

Thou hearest my command. Thou shalt obey,  
Answer me by the merit of holy obedience.

(*He waits wistfully for an answer. Receiving none, he turns toward the chapel. On the way he hesitates.*)

But sinners are brought back to God rather  
By gentleness than wrath. — My little son !

(*Enter Sister Dolorosa carrying a bowl of milk. She persuades him to return to the bench.*)

*Dolorosa*

I have been bid to offer you this food.

*Francesco*

Is this the voice I heard beside the well ?

*Dolorosa*

Aye, Father.

*Francesco*

I have heard that voice before  
In another garden —

*Dolorosa*

— Where the flowers were gay  
And peasant children sang of love and I  
Was the Child of Joy!

*Humble (within the hut of willow)*

My Child of Joy!

*Dolorosa*

But here

The Sisters name me Sister Dolorosa.

*Francesco (listening)*

We are alone? Then silently and soon  
The vow of holy obedience has been kept. —  
Thou shalt be Child of Blessedness, my Sister.

*Dolorosa (singing softly as she twines a wreath of white roses)*

There's nothing that can compare!

Silk o' the corn, 'tis rougher

Than Some One's golden hair!

(She flings down the flowers.)

A curious song to offer at the Hours;  
It minglest with the prayer, discordant strives  
To outshill canticle. Do you remember

The last dear glimpse of earth ere you were blind?  
Does it not burn before your eyes?

*Francesco*

The darkness

Was gathering slowly—

*Dolorosa (looking up at the lowering sky)*  
Like the sky above.

What if a hand was smote across your eyes,  
A blow for a caress! or if your ears  
Were deafened suddenly, would not the last  
Dear sound re-echo evermore?

*Francesco*

My Sister,

The voice of God shall speak to thee above  
The mockery of earthly sounds. This night  
Within my little cell I heard God's voice.  
Wouldst listen for that sweet mysterious mes-  
sage?

*Dolorosa*

Nor prayers nor penances unstopp mine ears  
To hear your mysteries.

*Francesco*

Wilt thou not eat  
For me? I need no food.

*Dolorosa (taking the cup from him)*  
Yes, I am hungry. (*She puts it down.*)  
And yet I cannot eat.

*Francesco*

But daintiness

And piety cannot agree.

*Dolorosa*

When I

Was better fed, I prayed the more.

*Francesco*

This robe

Discomforts thee?

*Dolorosa*

Ah, shivering where my jewel  
Was wont to glow!

*Humble (aside)*

How lightly slipped my gem  
Into the soot!

*Dolorosa*

'T is curious how gems  
And hearts are different. For always the fire  
Will glow within the jewel.

*Francesco*

Wilt thou listen

Unto God's word?

*Dolorosa*

Yes, I will listen, only  
I shall not understand, for I was born  
Of flesh, and you do claim to be a kinsman

To sunshine and the cloud, fire and the wind,  
Starlight and water. Even the very earth  
You tread is dear to you. My love was little,  
Encompassed all in one.

*Francesco*

Where is thy hand?

I charge thee, listen. In the night I cried  
To God, "Give grace to me, Thy lamb, that  
through

"No weakness of the flesh I fall from thee!"  
For I was crazed with fever in mine eyes.  
Straightway there came an awful voice from  
Heaven:

"Francesco, answer me, thy Lord. Were all  
"The earth of gold; were all the rivers, founts,  
"And seas of balm; were all the mountains,  
hills,  
"And rocks of precious stones; and it were true  
"That thou hadst found a treasure dearer far  
"As gold is far more precious than earth, and  
balm  
"Than water, likewise precious stones than  
rocks  
"And hills; then if that far more precious treas-  
ure  
"Were granted thee, together with this pain,

"So oughtest thou not therewith to be content  
 "And very light of heart?" I marvelled so  
 I scarce could answer. At length I murmured,  
 "Lord,

"I am unworthy of such precious treasure."  
 Again the Word of God came out of Heaven;  
 "Be of good cheer, Francesco, this affliction  
 "Of pain and weakness is a sign to thee  
 "Of what I have in store for thee, the treas-  
 ure

"Beyond all treasures, the gift of life eternal."

*(He ceases, spent with ecstasy. Dolorosa has been intent rather upon the exaltation of his look than on his meaning. She speaks quietly, at length.)*

*Dolorosa*

I love to think his face must shine like yours ;  
 Uplift to God and rapt in ecstasy !  
 Before his eyes the shining mysteries,  
 And God's voice calling him from Heaven.

Almost

Am I content.

*Humble (aside)*

The torture of Hell ! To stand  
 Transfixed before a mirror where I see  
 My hideousness ! 'T is but a masquerade,

My garb and title of humility.  
 A mockery of God. Oh, to have worn  
 My velvet with a braver grace, to die,  
 So to earn laurels from my people; even  
 To be dear to mine own knaves who flouted  
 me!

O warrior angel, with what wounding eyes  
 Thou leanest down to me! Seest thou me  
 Entirely now? What need hadst thou of Heaven  
 Who found earth worth the living and the  
 dying!

Beats there in me one pulse akin to thine?  
 I am abandoned of earth and Heaven, of all  
 Save her I marred the most!

*Dolorosa*

Why do you weep?

That I am sinful, all-unhallowed  
 By that white radiance that shines on him?  
 But you are blind from weeping. Sister Clare  
 Shall comfort you. Tell me before you go  
 The penance for my words.

*Francesco (opening the door and calling)*

Art thou within,

Sister Innocenza?

*Innocenza (appearing)*  
 Little Father!

*Francesco*

Thou shalt have aid of Sister Dolorosa  
To prune thy roses.                      (*He goes in.*)

*Innocenza* (*shyly, at her task*)

'T is the task I love  
More than the praises and the prayers, almost  
As dear to me as perfuming the altar.  
The sheltering walls are kind to my white roses.

*Dolorosa*

This branch had rooted on the other side.  
The topmost flower is crimson ; here below  
The petals pale. How long before the vine  
Forgets it ever bore a crimson blossom ? —  
I hear another脚步 in the garden.

*Innocenza*

We are alone. Sometimes I think the buds  
That die unblown are wisest.

*Dolorosa*

Why ?

*Innocenza*

The wind

Shall shatter the full blown.

*Dolorosa* (*turning up Innocenza's face*)

Ah, better so

Than to be shrivelled in the bud ! — I heard  
A sigh within the hut !

*Innocenza*

What I have heard

Was mirthful music coming near.

*Dolorosa*

Your ear

Is eager for the noises of the world

That pass your gate.

*Innocenza*

Nay, I do tell my beads

Aloud when wanton gaiety goes by.

Listen ! The air is strangely like the song

I 've heard thee murmur at thy penances.

(*She remembers herself and begins to tell her beads.*)

*Chorus (approaching)*

“ When'er she combs her tresses,

Veil that 's spun of foam and sun

Must fold those little shoulders

In lingering caresses ! ”

(*In a burst of sunshine the wedding party of*

*Innocenza and Felice go by.*)

*Innocenza (the bride)*

Sing softly here ! Ah, sing no more !

*Felice*

True heart,

Sad on thy wedding day ?

*Innocenza (selecting a wreath of scarlet poppies from her garlands)*

These are her flowers.

Shall they give balm or sorrow? She will know  
My heart doth bleed for her.

(*She throws the wreath over the gate.*)

*Felice*

No clouded eyes

To-day! My song again, the song she loves!

(*The bridal party passes singing.*)

There's nothing that can compare.

Flower o' the broom, thou art too dull,

Bloom o' the wheat, 't is paler,

Silk o' the corn, 't is rougher

Than Some One's golden hair!

*Sister Innocenza (tenderly, wondering)*

Ah, Sister Dolorosa, what shall be  
Our name for thee since thou hast learned to  
weep? —

The garden seems to echo with her cry —

Poppies are gay. Why should they make thee  
weep?

How came they here?

*Dolorosa*

A bride went singing by.

*Innocenza*

I would not hear the song!

LOVE IN UMBRIA III

*Dolorosa (significantly)*

Her name like yours  
Is Innocence!— A bridal gift for me!  
What can I know of bridals save the giving?

*Innocenza (troubled)*

Let us go in. My roses, nestle your heads  
Under the leaves; the clouds are black with  
storm.

(*She enters the cloister. Humble bars the entrance to Dolorosa.*)

*Humble*

Heart of my heart, I'll love thee into joy  
Again!

(*He peers into her face and starts back.*)

*Dolorosa*

O Mother of God! That hour has come  
I thought would bring me death.

*Humble*

O God, for mercy

A miracle! Breathe flame to dying ashes!

*Dolorosa (praying)*

O God, wilt Thou refuse Thy voice to me  
Alway? O Mary, woman, dost Thou hear?  
Do saints forget in Heaven they loved on earth?  
Teach me to answer him!

(*The door of the chapel opens. Brother Juni-*

per comes down the steps, passing them without noticing them. You see through the open door a narrow cell, and at the end of the corridor the lights of the altar, shining through the gathering darkness. There is a murmur of chanting.)

*Juniper*

O pitying God,  
Keep Brother Humble holy ! Sweet my Lord,  
Keep Brother Humble holy ! Even thus  
I'll pray a hundred times at every Hour,  
And thrice a hundred if I chance to wake  
At night — nay, I will lie upon the ground  
Lest I should sleep and thus the prayers be lost.  
Most gentle Lamb, keep Brother Humble holy !

(*He passes through the gate, still repeating his prayer. Dolorosa lets the flowers slip from her arms.*)

*Dolorosa*

O pitying God, Thou shinest on my heart,  
And my desire is open. Sweet my Lord,  
No chiding but the gift of heart's desire !  
Most gentle Lamb, keep Brother Humble holy !  
(*Aside.*) 'T is nothing to be feared, the voice of  
God !

A little stilling of the heart, music

Of far-off harmonies, like coming sleep,  
And light on everything!

(*She gazes contentedly at her cell.*)

Now I must know

I shall go softly evermore.

(*She turns as if remembering him suddenly,  
but not poignantly.*)

I had

Forgot; you have been near to death. You must  
Be lacking food.                   (*She holds out the cup.*)

*Humble (yielding at length)*

Always from thee to me?

(*He takes the cup from her.*)

*Dolorosa*

What heavenly visions do you see? Your eyes  
Are mystical!

*Humble*

I see the sacrament

Your hands hold out to me.

(*Again the bell tinkles.*)

*Dolorosa*

What do you hear?

*Humble*

The altar bell!

*Dolorosa*

What do you wait?

*Humble*

Forgiveness.

*Dolorosa (withdrawing)*

The Lord give thee His peace!

(*She passes through the door into her cell.*)

*The chanting grows distinct.)*

*The Sisters (within)*

I beseech Thee, O Lord, that the sweet and fiery strength of Thy love may draw my soul from all things under Heaven, that I may die for love of Thy love even as Thou didst deign to die for love of my love. Amen. (*The door closes.*)

*Humble*

“He wounded me to prove

“My heart can break for love!”

(*Stretching out his arms to the sky.*)

Spirit of flame! My soul kindles and leaps

To prove its kinship!

(*His tone and gesture become those of Valente.*)

I am born again

Into some shape of thee! Now may God send

A valiant, dear endeavor for the world

Two that I love found purposeful and sweet.

(*Again the bell tinkles.*)

O God, the sign ! For me the garb of meekness,  
(*exultant*) For me the storm, for me the leprosy!  
Blow, winds, and smite me to the earth ! And  
rain,

Stain me and drench my limbs into a fever !  
And I will sing, for singing on the lips  
Of agony is bitterer than tears !

(*The gate clangs behind him. The storm sweeps down, blotting out the scene. But above the storm may be heard the voice of Brother Humble singing*)

He wounded me to prove  
My heart can break for love !  
My heart's aflame with love !  
My heart's aflame with love !

CURTAIN





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